

Naw Su

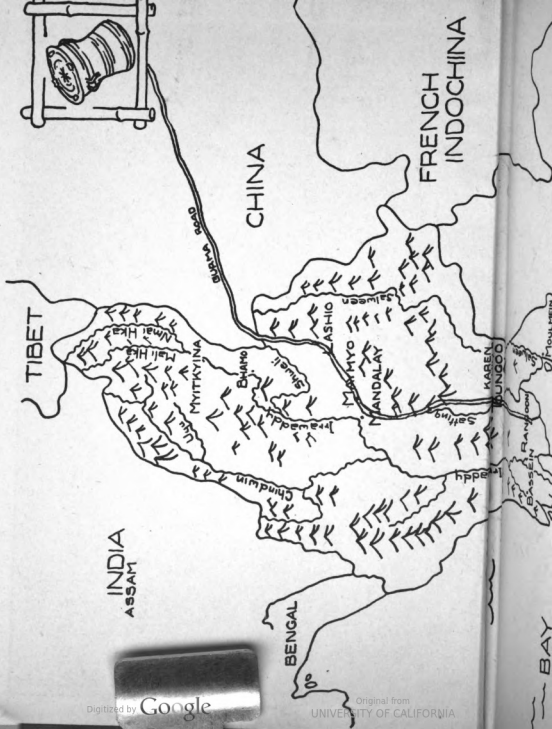
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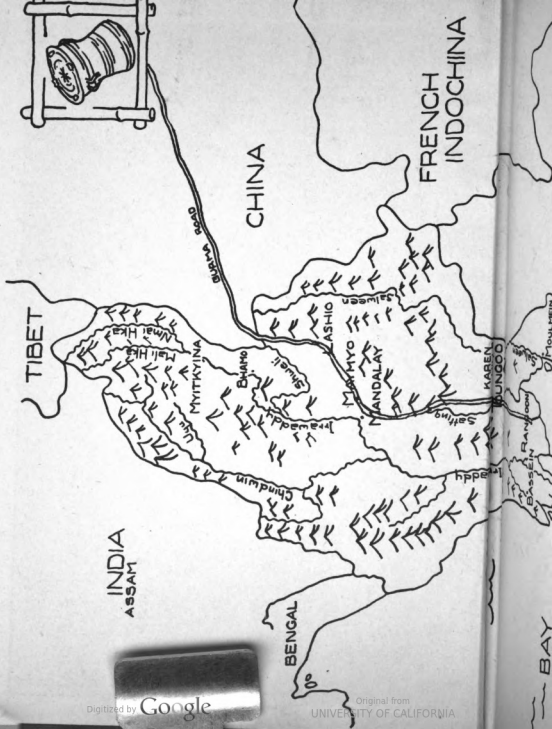
HARRY I. MARSHALL

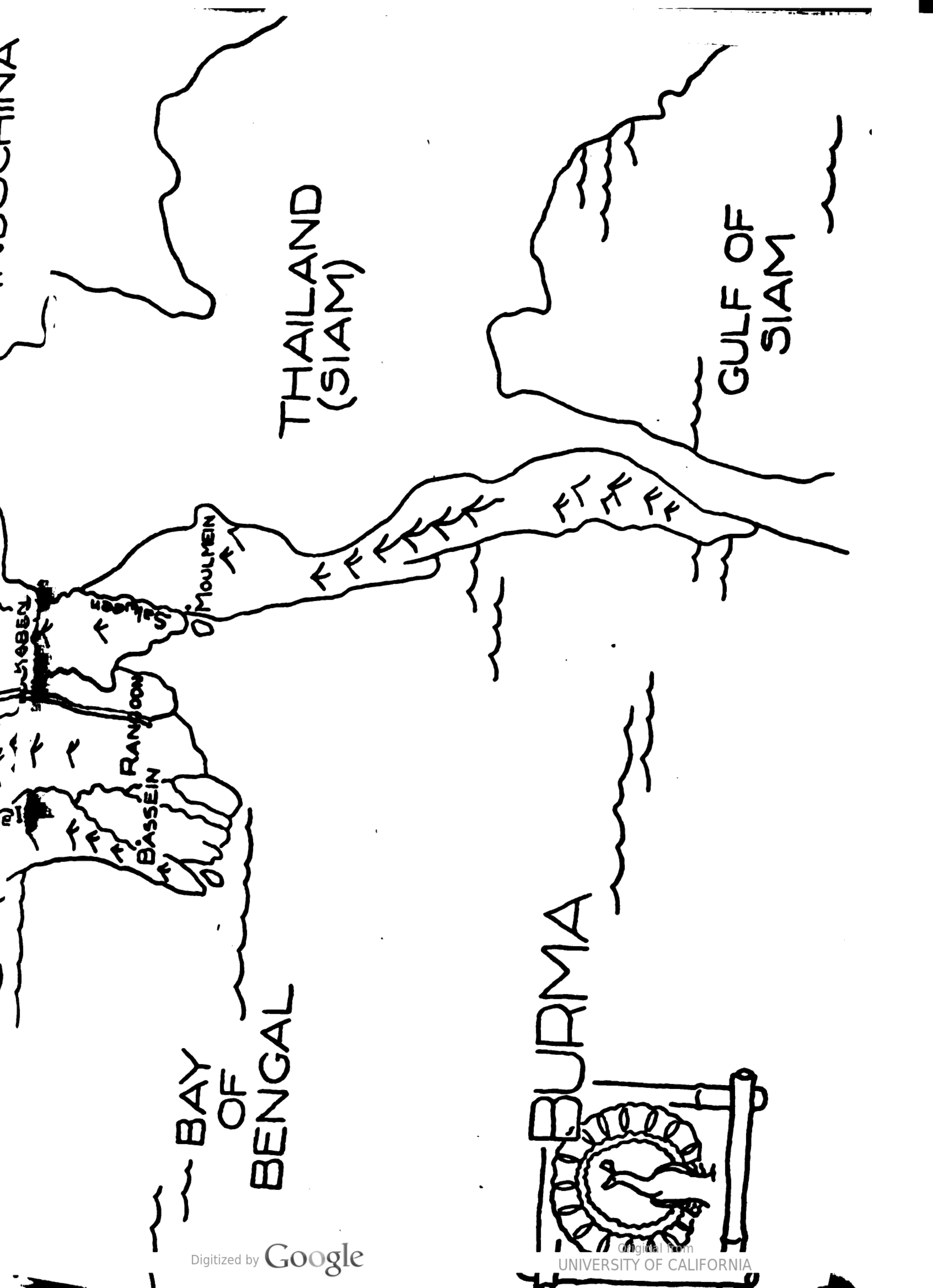
Naw Su

by

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THAILAND
(SIAM)

GULF OF
SIAM

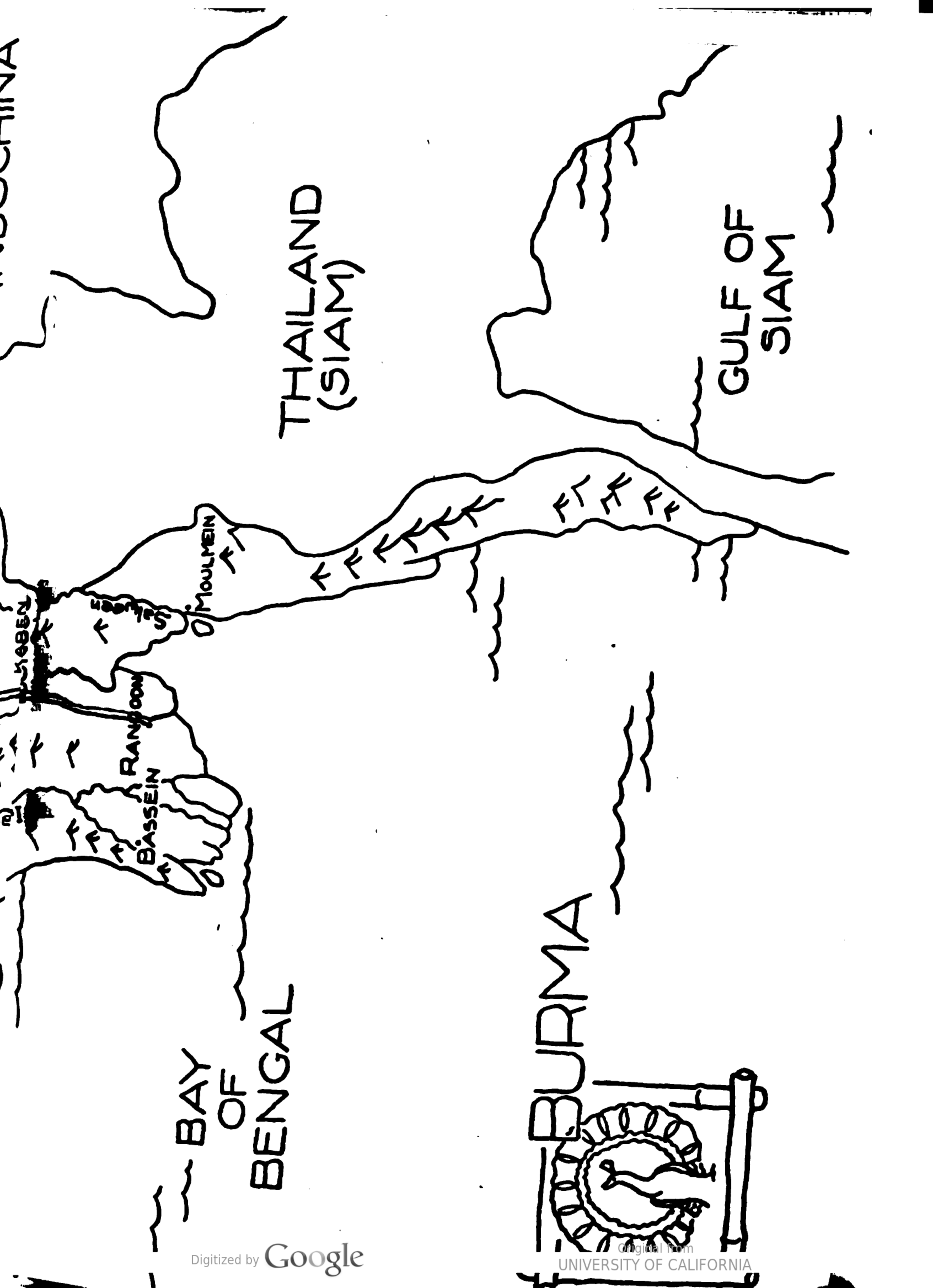
MOULMEIN

RANGOON
BASSEIN

BAY
OF
BENGAL

BURMA





THAILAND
(SIAM)

GULF OF
SIAM

BAY
OF
BENGAL

BURMA

GIFT OF
HORACE W. CARPENTIER



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Other books by the author:

The Karen People of Burma

Davidoss and His Preaching Problems

Flashes Along the Burma Road

*Also nine educational books in the
Karen language*

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A STORY OF BURMA

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HARRY I. MARSHALL

ILLUSTRATED BY AUDREY RANDS

PORTLAND, MAINE
Falmouth Publishing House

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PRINTED IN THE
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To
EFFIE LAWRENCE MARSHALL
*without whose inspiration and
help this book might not
have been written*

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CHAPTER I

THE monsoon was tearing up the valley between the saw-toothed hills of Burma. The rain was being driven in horizontal sheets against the crude hut of bamboo where Ko Tu Dee was squatting in a vain endeavor to keep dry. Every stitch of his single scant *hsay* (smock) was wet through. His knees were drawn up against his body and his head was resting on them. In this time of great strain his gaunt face showed the ill effects of an incomplete diet of rice and of many a bout with malaria. His cheek bones stood out, and his matted hair was flying in the wind. He seemed to be trying to hold himself together.

The rainy season was the time when the families of Tee Wa Village scattered and went to the little huts they had built on the sides of the mountains where they cultivated their rice in obliquely set clearings after the custom of their ancestors. They belonged to the Karen tribe of Burma that had migrated from the north-east of China. They had withdrawn into the almost inaccessible mountains for protection from their more powerful and aggressive Burmese neighbors who never failed to make the most of every occasion to exploit them. They came to be known as the wild cattle of the

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hills, but even in the hills they were not at peace. Every stream, mountain and tree was the abode of some *nat* (devil) that was only waiting for a favorable opportunity to swoop down on them and eat the *Kala* (soul).

Tonight it seemed to Ko Tu Dee that all the powers of the earth and water were conspiring against him and his little family, and especially against the new life that was struggling for entrance into the torn world.

The wife, Naw Pu Lay, was lying beneath a soaked blanket beyond the loosely woven bamboo mat that partitioned off a room. Her soft moaning could be heard above the howling of the wind and the swish of the rain. Her time for delivery had come and her long continued pains had brought her near the limit of her endurance. She felt that the storm, with all of the demons of the earth and air, was conspiring against her.

"Granny Paw Ti cannot get up here," she moaned. They had arranged for the old woman who usually presided at births to give such assistance as she could, but it would be impossible for her to make her way up the steep mountain in such a storm.

As if to demonstrate their full power, the elements seemed to increase their force. The wind howled louder and louder. The two tall trees near the hut crashed. The fall sounded ominous, but fortunately the trees did not crush the frail structure. The half-grown rice plants on the side of the mountain were waving like the billows of the ocean.

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Their roots held fast, but the waters gathered and flowed down the little furrows in turgid rivulets that carried away much of the soil that remained after the washing of many monsoons.

The heavy, low hung clouds rolled up the mountain, obscuring everything. Water seemed to drop out of them in buckets full. The wind lashed furiously. It looked as though all of the *nats* were conspiring to flood the land and blow away the mountain. The black parrier dog whined and hugged up to his master for mutual protection. The pigs beneath the hut squealed in fright. Gust after gust of wind seemed to try to blow the roof from the hut. Even the heavy stones with which the roof was weighted pounded so hard that Ko Tu Dee feared they would slip through the frail rafters.

The prospective father was sullen and sad. He was struck with terror. It was no time for a child to be born when all of the powers of earth and air and water were plotting together for its destruction. The wind and rain seemed but to be messengers of the unseen terrors that continually stalked through the land to eat the *kalas* of the weak and timid.

Another moan from the other side of the partition. He grew more haggard. He could not move. His mind kept groping for some reason for their plight. What had he neglected to do to permit such calamity? Had he not refrained from cutting any bit of his long hair for months lest he cut short the life of the child? Had he not put out lumps of cooked rice with which to feed the hungry spirits? Had he not tied bits of red cloth along the paths,

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and had he not planted many stalks of red coxcomb about the hut to dazzle the eyes of the demons so that when they came seeking for someone in trouble they would see no signs of child-birth going on? Had he not cautioned his wife against eating bitter or astringent herbs? Had he not forbade her to eat crocodile's tongue, the long smooth pod of a vine that trails from tree to tree? Why then, should the demons call all the powers of the air to assist them in attacking him at such a time as this?

Were there other rules that he had missed that might endanger the life of the child? How could one keep one's head at a time like this? There was such a maze of pitfalls for a poor rice farmer. He was certain that he had failed to keep on friendly terms with all of the powers of the unseen world and now they were hitting back at him.

The wind-driven rain was drenching everything. It looked as though it would even spoil the rice crop. Then what would he have for himself and his family to eat? The little hut was almost blown down. If it went, it would leave them without shelter and the wife was unable to move. Now she was calling out. What could he do?

He had had no time to consult the oracle of the chicken bones, nor to kill a pig and see if its gall bladder was full and round, which would have given him hope. He could only send up a prayer to the *Kti K'Sa Kaw K'Sa* (Lords of the Land) for what help they could give, and then he must do what seemed best. Where could he turn for com-

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fort? He took up a short bamboo joint and sucked at a tiny hollow stem, hoping to find a few more drops of the mash that supplied him with sour liquor, but it had long been sucked out so that only the gurgling of the stem was left to mock his desire for a stimulant. There was nothing there, and he could not prepare more in the storm. He set the joint down with the feeling that this was the last day that he and his family would ever see.

Hours went by. The dark day was followed by the inky blackness of the night. The children slept and the pigs squealed in protest when one crowded the other too much in an effort to keep warm. The howling wind sounded like a pack of fierce tigers or the trumpeting of a herd of elephants. This alarmed him. Were they real animals? Was it the cry of unsatisfied devils now taking on physical form? Were the powers of earth and sky combining to deprive him of his wife and the coming child?

His wife's agonizing cry rose above the terrible storm. It was hard to bear. Even a stolid mountain Karen was moved by it. There seemed to be nothing that he could do.

"Get up," beseeched the wife.

He cautiously put a foot on the swollen abdomen; then, holding onto the side of the hut to steady himself, he brought the other foot up beside it and gently began to tread, beginning at the waist and moving downward. Nature must have help when it cannot bring about results unaided. The groans of the woman were unheeded. He knew they were not

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in protest against the harsh treatment, but that she had reached the limit of human endurance.

Faint glimmerings of light began to streak the eastern mountain ridge. The thin wail of a child was heard. The agony was over. The mother lay unconscious from exhaustion.

Ko Tu Dee took the child, after cutting the cord with his *daw* (long knife). The rain was now letting up, so he carried it out into the open, dipped water with a large gourd from a jar that had been set under the eaves and poured it over the quivering little body. Then he wrapped it in a sodden blanket and laid it beside the mother's breast for warmth.

Now he must build a fire, for every woman must lie beside the fire after giving birth to a child in order to build up her strength. He picked out the driest of the small logs beneath the hut and took it up to the fireplace. He stuck the end of it into the smoldering ashes, and after much blowing and coaxing it broke into a reluctant blaze. Things began to take on a more normal look. The sky was beginning to brighten and the wind and rain had spent their fury.

Tribal customs prescribed that he must remain in the hut for several days. All of the care of the mother and child devolved on him. He sat beside the unconscious woman, confused and bewildered. He did not know what to do unless he called the medicine man from a distant village. Now it seemed to be too late for that. A medley of fears confused his brain. Were the demons trying to play

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some trick on him? It was beyond his understanding.

There was a faint stirring on the mat. His wife opened her eyes. They looked like the blood-shot eyes of some beast that had been wounded and was now reviving and seeking escape from its tormentors. Her hair was matted from much turning and thrashing about and her face was deeply lined with pain. Her eyes rested on his face and he could not avoid their questioning.

Must he tell her? He thought perhaps she might sleep again and he could put her off. No, they sought the answer that he must give. Pulling himself together, he muttered, "Another girl."

They already had two girls. As yet there were no boys to carry on his family, or to cultivate his share in the village lands. Girls could work, but they were not as strong as boys. They might bring husbands back to the house, but that would be a long time ahead. This child was so weak, perhaps it would not live and that would be better. He would be saved a lot of trouble, but he thought of the blue patches on its white skin. It must have vitality, for that proved that it had come a long way from the place of its previous existence and it had sat down on some green leaves to rest by the way. It must have great strength. It must be meant to live, for it had stood against all the efforts of the *nats* to blow away or drown its *kala*. If he had known what change the little mite would make in the family, and the village perhaps, he would have begged the *nats* to take it away.

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A few days later he casually remarked to his wife, "We will call her Naw Su, because she was born in the storm." It was indeed a prophetic name.

Su means rain or storm and *Naw* indicated that the name belonged to a woman.

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CHAPTER II

THE village was in a state of excitement. "Hi! Hi! Everyone. We have dammed up the creek and have set the bundles of *xaw hter* (poison weed) in the upper pool. The fish are already coming to the surface. Bring your baskets and scoops and come along and have some fun."

Naw Su's mother was not long in responding to the call. Every woman in the village heard the cry, and joyous shouts rang from one house to another. You could hear the loose bamboo floors creak under their quick, heavy tread as they grabbed their equipment, quite unmindful of the smell that lingered from many a similar expedition.

Naw Su also heard the summons and no one was more ready for fun than she. In her imperious baby fashion she began to order the other children to go with her.

In a few moments the women were going down the shaky ladders that led from their front doors to the ground. They joined the eager throng and descended the hill that led down into the valley. They were all gaily laughing, as were the men who were not slow to join them—all happy in anticipation of the fun and the feast that was to follow. They had

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to watch carefully as they walked to avoid tramping on the many shouting children and the barking pariah dogs that scampered in and out among them. At the foot of the hill the mountain torrent had worn a deep bed in the rock. The dry weather had reduced it to a mere brook that leaped from pool to pool.

The women had no sooner come together than they began to gossip and to criticize each other. "That brat of yours is going to be a big girl. You will have to weave a *hsay* for her very soon. She is getting too large to go without clothes."

"Yes," replied Naw Su's mother. "She is growing up but do not say it out loud. The *nats* will hear you. Then they will look for her and their attentions always mean trouble. We called her Naw Su because there was a terrible storm the night she was born high up on the side of the mountain. We hoped the devils would not think she was of much value, and it has been that way, for they have let her alone so far. Perhaps they cannot catch her. She is so swift and is always on the run. Last night her father whispered to me that he likes her pretty well even if she is a girl. He thinks she will be able to plant the rice and to use a harvest sickle next season."

Naw Pu Lay took the bamboo pipe with a monkey bone for a stem from her mouth as she went on, "She is really the worst child that I have. She is into everything. She runs away all the time. I do try to keep a *hsay* on her but she will not wear it. She leaves it on the ground anywhere and runs like a wild goat. She bosses everyone. Even little boys will

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do whatever she tells them to do. She is like the wind. Here one moment, there the next."

"She must have some powerful medicine in her," said one of the women. "She has no sores on her legs like the other children. Her skin is brown and smooth. She is in the sun all the time."

Before they could say more they had rounded the knoll and had reached the edge of a steep bank. The children had run ahead. They were wading in the stream and were reaching for the stunned fish whose white bellies were glistening on the surface of the water. The girls, who were considered large enough, were wearing *hsays* and the boys were wearing *bombies* (loose pants). They now left them on the bank that they might be free to catch the slippery fish and toss them into the baskets that the women had set along the banks.

The few men that could be spared from the work in the clearing had dammed up the pools and were standing about laughing at the children's fun. They had gathered their smocks around their loins and their legs showed the iron muscles that had been developed by the many miles they had tramped up and down the steep hills.

Naw Su seemed to be everywhere at once. She would splash into the cold water whenever she saw a fish that was larger and more to be desired than the rest. She did not seem to mind getting in over her head and would call to the others to grab the fish that were floundering just behind them. When she got cold, she ran to the bonfire that had been built on the bank where others were squatting and

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sticking out their hands to warm themselves. Her brown body shone in the sunlight that filtered through the over-hanging trees. Drops of water trickled down her shapely limbs as she thrust first one foot and then the other toward the fire. Soon with a squeal and a laugh she would again leap into the water and always bring out the biggest fish.

After an hour or so the fish began to be scarce. The people could not find any more in the stream, but the piles on the bank and the overflowing baskets held enough so that everyone in the village could have a generous evening meal. The smaller fish could be spread on the mats to dry. Later they could be pounded and made into the special condiment that every Karen and Burman considers a great delicacy.

The romping children were called out of the cold water, made to dry themselves by the fire and put on their clothes. They laughed and exchanged stories of how they had caught their fish, how some got away or how they stepped into holes and almost went under but were always able to stop their breath and bob out.

The women toiled up the hill under heavy loads. When they reached the top, they poured all of the fish into one pile and divided them. Naw Su would run about, eye the piles, grab a fish from one pile and throw it into another, and laugh for sheer joy. Her mother could not stop her, nor could she catch her, for her naked little body was as slippery as a wet fish.

The older women shook their heads: "That

sticking out their hands to warm themselves. Her brown body shone in the sunlight that filtered through the over-hanging trees. Drops of water trickled down her shapely limbs as she thrust first one foot and then the other toward the fire. Soon with a squeal and a laugh she would again leap into the water and always bring out the biggest fish.

After an hour or so the fish began to be scarce. The people could not find any more in the stream, but the piles on the bank and the overflowing baskets held enough so that everyone in the village could have a generous evening meal. The smaller fish could be spread on the mats to dry. Later they could be pounded and made into the special condiment that every Karen and Burman considers a great delicacy.

The romping children were called out of the cold water, made to dry themselves by the fire and put on their clothes. They laughed and exchanged stories of how they had caught their fish, how some got away or how they stepped into holes and almost went under but were always able to stop their breath and bob out.

The women toiled up the hill under heavy loads. When they reached the top, they poured all of the fish into one pile and divided them. Naw Su would run about, eye the piles, grab a fish from one pile and throw it into another, and laugh for sheer joy. Her mother could not stop her, nor could she catch her, for her naked little body was as slippery as a wet fish.

The older women shook their heads: "That

little pullet will not live to lay eggs." They quoted from an old proverb. "The devils will catch her. Look here, Naw Su's mother, you had better look after that child."

"What can I do?" she asked with a sigh. "She keeps me worried all the time. Her father would be sorry if anything happened to prevent her from growing up and being a help to him, but he can't do anything with her now."

The fishing expedition had required a lot of time. The shadows stretched long from the clumps of bamboo and their light would soon be cut off by the high ridge toward the west. The air began to cool. The chickens gave the evening call. Brooding hens used that peculiar tone that tells their young it is time to rest. There was plenty of commotion as the hens began to fly up to the baskets under the floors of the houses where they spent the night for protection against the prowling leopards and crawling snakes.

The pigs were lustily squealing over the troughs where they were accustomed to get their food. The men returned from the fields, driving their cattle and buffaloes before them and raising a great cloud of dust. There were always the young steers that wanted to pit their strength against that of the older bulls. So the evening hour was never without color and variety.

Sometimes the men who had been working would pour cold water over themselves, but usually they washed only the hands, neck and face and allowed the dust of years to collect on the body. The women hastened to build the fire on the crude

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hearth. A space three or four feet square had been covered with a few inches of earth that was boxed in by four lengths of bamboo, mortised at the corners. On this they built their fires and cooked their rice. Tonight the smell of cooking fish rose from every hearth. It had been a good day for the village. Now they could eat in peace, for their little bamboo houses were close together, and they were well up in the mountains, far from the marauding Burmans. There was no need to tell their children to eat quickly because the Burmans might come, as they would have to do were they in the villages that were nearer the plains.

The bustle and activity of the evening was what Naw Su enjoyed most. She took part in everything that was going on. She would grab a small bamboo pole and run after an obstreperous ox, or beat up a pig as he was getting his snout into a trough, and it was her favorite diversion to shoo at a mother hen and watch her bristle up and fight back.

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CHAPTER III

A FEW months after the fishing expedition one of the village elders was taken with a severe chill. He rolled himself up in his thin cotton blanket and the whole house creaked with his shaking. His old wife and his sons began to be alarmed, for the chill lasted longer than usual. Then the fever mounted and he was hot and delirious for several days. They began to talk about some remedy to help him to get well. The village medicine man was called and he was promised a generous gift if he would cure him. He tried the quickened pulse, felt of the old man's hands and feet, and finding them clammy after the fever, he told the family the omen was very bad and the patient would probably die. He cautioned him not to eat chicken or duck, for he said the flesh of them was not compatible with the kind of demon that was possessing him.

He looked to see if the old man's wrist was properly tied up so that the demon could not crawl up and get at his heart. He examined the charms that had been tattooed on his breast and back and they seemed to have been put on properly. The ill man was talking incoherently. That was evidence that the *kala* had been enticed away from the body. That was why he had been so wracked with fever. They

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must get it back at all costs. They must have a feast for the family spirits, the *bgha*, and try to persuade the wandering *kala* to come back.

After much talking and many futile suggestions about the illness the medicine man ordered the daughter-in-law, who was now the most active woman in the house, to prepare the feast for the family demons. This was a complicated process. First she must set the pot on the fire for the cooking of the rice. Then she must go out and catch the chicken.

That attracted the attention of Naw Su. She had seen the preparation for the *bgha* feasts many times before, but now, because she was getting older, she took a new interest. When the woman came down from the house of sickness and began to throw out paddy and call the chickens, she watched with rapt attention. Her eyes brightened. She thought there would be a lot of fun before the slow-motioned woman could get her hands on a chicken in broad daylight.

She screamed with laughter at the woman's efforts, for often the woman almost fell over in her futile attempts to get her hands on an escaping hen. Soon all of the fowls in the village were in a noisy flurry. Naw Su not only watched but she tried to help. The rules required that the daughter-in-law must catch the chicken, so she was scolded and told to keep out of the way.

At length one bird, less agile than the rest, was caught. The woman climbed up into the house with

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it under her arm while it squawked with fright. She handed it to her husband. He held it against his well-worn smock and called the family together. When they were all assembled, he stroked its beak and began repeating the usual incantation: "Take away sickness. Remove weariness and swellings. Fly away with fevers and cold chills. Give us life and happiness for a hundred years."

By this time Naw Su had slyly crept up the ladder and was watching the proceedings, peeking around a corner of the doorway. She saw the wife stroke the beak of the bird, and in turn she heard the father repeat the same prayer and so on through the family until they came to the old mother who was now considered the last of the group. Then the son cut up the chicken with his *dah* and it was put into the pot with a bit of salt and a chili.

There was nothing of special interest after that, so Naw Su slipped down the ladder without being noticed. She became so interested in playing that two old plantain stalks were a pair of oxen that she did not return to see the family eat the feast as she had intended. Each in turn ate a morsel before they began to make a good meal for themselves. This was supposed to benefit the demons that were worrying the old man.

The eating of the chicken was but the first stage of the ceremony. The demons could not be bought off lightly, and they were greatly to be feared. They required that in the afternoon of that day and again on the following day (because the grand-parents of

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the sick man were in the other world) that the relatives must sacrifice a pig. Here again the prescribed ritual must be carefully observed if they hoped to effect a cure for the old man who was still burning with a terrible fever. His delirium showed that his *kala* was still wandering. First it was out in the rice clearings, then it was out in the hill country lying in ambush to kill a party of Burmese. It must be gotten back or the old man could not stand the absence much longer and it would never return. He would soon be stiff in death.

Naw Su had stopped in her play several times to watch the one pig that had not been turned out to forage in the surrounding jungle or to eat the of-fal that had been left all around the village. He squealed and scolded, and sometimes he almost broke through the bamboo that made a pen for him. Naw Su tantalized him and laughed in great glee when he almost escaped. The woman was watching and ran after the wily little animal with a stick, which caused Naw Su to scurry out of sight and watch from a thicket that grew near the house.

When it was past noon, the son came down and began to tie up the legs of the pig. The animal's protest brought Naw Su to the scene again. She watched them truss up the legs and carry the squealing, protesting animal up into the house. She heard the commotion when they strangled it. They took great care not to break any bones or to shed its blood. In every effort that she made to get nearer that she might gloat over his struggles Naw Su was repeatedly thwarted by members of the family,

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for it was taboo for any outsider to be present at the ceremonies.

When they ran a spit of bamboo through the strangled pig and carried it outside to burn off the bristles, so that the smell of them would not reach the sick man, she followed closely. In vain the elders tried to drive her away. She always turned up again like an untrained dog.

When the bristles had all been burned off and the scarred and blackened carcass was brought back, she was marching in the procession. When they went up stairs where the carcass must be placed at the head of the sleeping mats, she was not allowed to follow. Her face fell with disappointment, but she was not discouraged. Children are more clever in accomplishing their purposes than their elders are in stopping them.

She could hear the creaking of the loose bamboo floor as the different members of the family approached the dead animal in the order of their age and touched it with the finger-tips, begging it to take away all of their sins in breaking taboos and to bear in its body the evils that might befall them. Then she heard the steady *dah* strokes as they began to chop up the beast and prepare it for the cooking pot.

She only pretended to play. Every few minutes she would return to the house to see what was going on. The smell of cooking meat was tantalizing. She wished it had been one of her family that was sick, then she would be allowed to stay in the house, see all that was going on and eat her fill of the pork

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It was very quiet in the house all at once. She wondered what was happening. Everyone was intent on what they were doing and there was no one guarding the door. She decided to climb quietly up the ladder and see for herself. Carefully tossing her *hsay* from her she slowly crept up the ladder and saw the family squatting in a circle on the mat. There was an immense tray that had been carved out of a section of a big tree. In the center was a great mound of steaming rice that was surrounded by cubed pork seasoned with salt and chili. Every member of the family was silent with eyes bent on their food. She drew a bit nearer to enjoy the enticing odor. Before anyone noticed her she was well inside the door.

One of the young men who was facing that way saw her. He gave a shout that almost frightened her out of her wits. The tenseness of the solemn feast was broken, and when they saw that an outsider had intruded, they jumped up and started toward her. She had broken a well-known taboo and all of the effect of the feast had been annulled. The family spirits were offended. The old man's *kala* would never come back. He must die, for the unruly brat had spoiled all of their work. Another pig would have to be killed and all of the process would have to be gone over from the beginning.

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ground, but not before one of the men had thrown a bamboo at her that gave her a sharp blow across the back. She ran down the village street screaming with pain and fright, but she was careful not to go near her own house, for she knew her mother would beat her for interfering with the solemn rites of a neighbor.

Of course it was not long before the whole village knew what had happened. They all blamed the mother for not taking better care of her meddlesome daughter. Then they called the little girl names that were most uncomplimentary to her and all of her ancestors. Naw Su decided the village was not a healthy place for her that day. She went out to the hillside below the village, then down to the creek where they had caught the fish the week or two before. There she found delight in chasing frogs that jumped in and out of the pools. In this way she kept herself out of sight until the shadows began to lengthen. By this time she thought her mother's wrath would have cooled and that she would not be in any danger of punishment at home. She would keep out of sight of the sick man's family.

Her child's mind had been groping over the problems of life all the afternoon. What were those things the family called *bghas*? How could the *kala* wander away from a man's body? Was he dreaming, just as she had dreamed of catching fish last night? Why were they so particular to keep her out of their house? Could anyone see the *bghas* or the *kala*? She had heard folks talk a lot about

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CHAPTER IV

NAW PU LAY shouted harsh words at her little daughter the next day after she had stolen into the sick house and by her presence there had broken up the sacrificial feast. "You little monkey's tail, you keep out of sight today and every day! You killed that old man! You caused him to die! You little bit of offal, do you know you are a curse to your house and to your village? You will surely be food for the devils. Get away off out of here."

Before they could go through the ritual again by sacrificing another pig to coax the *kala* back into the emaciated body, the sick man's strength gave out and he went beyond the pale of sacrifice. Then, of course, the blame was thrown back upon the inquisitive little girl who had stolen into the sick house while they were busy with the ceremony. The taboo against an outsider coming in at such a time had been broken, and of course the consequences must rest on the one who would do such an inconsiderate thing.

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funeral fun with the rest of the family. Since she was accused of killing the old man she had better keep out of the sight of his relatives, for there was no telling what they might do. In their primitive way of living the law of retaliation was frequently evoked.

The scolding that she had taken from her mother that morning and the cold way in which her father had scorned her before he went out to the clearing had terrified her. This was one occasion when she did not know what to do. Hitherto when a burst of anger had been directed toward her, she had been able to keep out of sight until it had spent itself, which was usually in a few hours, for the Karens had no system of disciplining their children. When very angry, they would scold them, and sometimes beat them, and then turn around and indulge them in all their foolish whims.

This was different. Never before had she been accused of killing a person. She could not understand why she should be treated as an outcast for merely trying to satisfy her curiosity. She had meant no harm. She had hurt no one; but they said she had spoiled the feast, had angered the demons, and on that account the old man had died. She could not understand why, but the elders all agreed that it was so. There seemed to be nothing she could do but take their word for it.

She had to keep out of sight all day while the rest of the village gathered at the house where the man lay on the mat. She could not even watch to see what was going on. She suddenly realized that she was

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already in the depths of disgrace, so why should she care what happened to her. She slid down the bamboo pole that stood against the back of the house and stole away into the jungle. She had not eaten any rice that morning. Her father and mother had been so angry that she had not dared to help herself to the rice pot as usual. Even her two older sisters joined in the tirade against her, which made her feel utterly deserted and bereft. She almost wished that she had died and a lot of fuss was being made over her. It would be great to be the center of attention.

She went down to the stream and watched the new fish that were beginning to play about in the water. She envied them. They were free. No one was accusing them of killing someone.

"How could I have killed him?" she questioned herself. "Why is everyone so afraid of the demons? Do they really make all the trouble? The old man looked as though he was tired of living."

Her active little mind turned things over and over that day. Every little while she would hear some noise like the beating of a tom-tom, that would remind her of what was going on in the village. How she wished she could be there and have something to think of except the hurt in her heart. Then she heard the sound of a great bronze drum, and remembered that her father had said the family at the death house had one hidden away in the jungle. Now they had brought it forth. Its sweet music would make the women weep, for it would soften their hearts and they would remember the friends they had lost and all of the friends from whom they

already in the depths of disgrace, so why should she care what happened to her. She slid down the bamboo pole that stood against the back of the house and stole away into the jungle. She had not eaten any rice that morning. Her father and mother had been so angry that she had not dared to help herself to the rice pot as usual. Even her two older sisters joined in the tirade against her, which made her feel utterly deserted and bereft. She almost wished that she had died and a lot of fuss was being made over her. It would be great to be the center of attention.

She went down to the stream and watched the new fish that were beginning to play about in the water. She envied them. They were free. No one was accusing them of killing someone.

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were separated. It was going to be a fine funeral. Why did she have to miss the fun?

Toward evening hunger drove her back to her house. She dodged about, keeping in concealment as much as possible, and approached the house from the rear. The bamboo that she had slid down was still in place and she shinnied up that rather than to risk the front entrance. Probably the folks were at the funeral house and she might slip in and get some cold rice out of the pot and satisfy her hunger.

The hens were calling to their chickens. The pigs were grunting and squealing around their troughs. The cattle were raising a cloud of dust as they came back to be tied up for the night. Lucky for her the folks were all at the house of death, and she could find a good bit of cold rice and a few greens that her father had brought back from the clearing. It did not take long to toss a few balls of rice into her mouth and gobble them down. She watched and listened lest her mother should come back to feed the animals and find her there.

She decided that the best thing to do would be to roll up in her dirty cotton blanket and pretend to be asleep. Then she could hear the sweet music and the sound of weeping. She had been told that in the good old days the funeral services had been long, taking from three to seven days; but in these latter days, even though the village of Tee Wa where Naw Su lived was isolated away up in the mountains east of Toungoo and had almost no contact with the outside world to mar the customs of the ancestors, there was a tendency to let things slip.

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Moreover the crops for the past year had been very poor. A break in the monsoon had brought a dry spell just when the rice was in its most critical stage and the kernels had not filled. Some of the elders wanted to start an investigation to see if there had been improper relations between the young people to cause the demons to dry up the land and prevent a good harvest, but others merely shook their heads and complained that things were not as they used to be. There is so much letting down these days that they could not be sure of things, and there is enough trouble anyway, and so they had not better start anything now. They were having a hard time to find enough to eat and they did not want to spend time and money on the old man.

When the people had come in from their fields, had eaten their rice, and had collected at the house of death, they had the ceremony of "Lighting the Way" to the "house" where the man was to go, for even though the man was still in death, he would not find rest until all of the ceremonies of his funeral were finished. They must help him to find his proper place in the next life.

Two young men took their places on either side of the corpse. One held a lighted candle between his first and second fingers. He passed it to a young man on the opposite side and he took it between his second and third fingers, being very careful to keep it upright. He returned it to the first man who took it between his third and fourth fingers and threw it under the house. Then they raised their hands toward the sky and said to the corpse, "There are the

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roots of your trees." Then pointing to the earth, they shouted, "There are the tops of your trees." Pointing toward the source of the creek that flowed at the foot of the hill below the village, they said, "There is the mouth of your rivers." Then pointing to the mouth of the creek, they said, "There is the source of your river." In this way they indicated that in the land of the spirits everything is opposite to what it is here on earth. It is the "Upside Down Land." They believe that the hardships of this world will be turned into continuous enjoyment in the next.

After much discussion they decided that they would bury the body the next day. That night they would have the customary funeral procession and the young people would chant the old songs as they marched. There were hardly enough to hold a rhyming contest. Too bad, for that always created a lot of interest and it helped the people to forget their grief. There was but a small supply of liquor and there was no time to brew more, so they would do what they could and the next day they would enjoy the usual funeral games. Before sun down they would take the body out through the hole that they would make in the side of the house. Then they could return to their normal way of living.

It was nearly midnight when Naw Su was awakened by the chanting at the funeral house. It was alight with about a dozen torches made from *Kan-yin* or oil wood. She could look across the narrow space between the houses and see what was going on. She wanted to go over, but she knew it would not

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be safe. She could see a bundle on the floor wrapped in a mat and she knew it was the corpse. There were little offerings of rice and pork on the tray near its head. The face was not hidden in the wrappings and she could see little black things over the eyes. They were bits of pig's liver that were there to help the man to see more clearly in the next world. Her view was interrupted by the men and women who passed around and around the body. She could not hear what they were saying.

She heard a murmur of delight and saw a group of young people arrive from the next village. The people were all buzzing, "Now we can have the rhyming contest."

She could see the young men walk around the dead man and could hear them chant two lines of poetry at the top of their voices. Then they stepped aside and the same number of young women took up the chant as they followed the line of march. Sometimes they would hesitate or stumble and a shout of derision would go up from the men. It meant that they were losing out in the attempt to keep up with the contest and make the most telling response. Child that she was, Naw Su's quick mind often ran far ahead and she longed to help the girls.

Why did she have to be one hiding in the darkness? Almost everyone in the village was there. She could see her sisters and her little brother. He was nursing at her mother's breast. All of the other children were there. Some had fallen asleep. Others were playing without attracting the notice of their elders.

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She was doomed to sit looking on from her place of hiding while the fun went on far into the night. At length she fell asleep just where she was, at the front of the house where she had crept so that she might be as near the merry-making as possible.

When it was near dawn, her father and mother came back for a few winks of sleep. They found her there. The father gave her a kick with his bare foot and grunted that she was the cause of all their misery. The mother showed her no sympathy; her daughter was guilty of the terrible sin of breaking a taboo. Naw Su crawled off to her corner and made herself as small as possible, but she did not cry.

The elders decided that in order to assure the departed a safe journey to the land to which he must go they must observe the game of *hsi kle*. It was the jumping of the long pestles with which the women pounded and polished their rice before cooking it. They would use four bamboos, which were the usual substitute for the shorter pestles. After the villagers had been fed mourning rice by the bereft family they all gathered in the open space near the house. Four strong young men grasped the ends of the bamboos, two of which crossed the others at right angles. They were held a cubit's length apart and kept parallel. At the beating of the drums a young fellow, amid much jolly and chaffing, started to jump in and out between the parallel poles. Another fellow would lift them higher from the ground and quickly strike them down again. They did this three times and on the fourth beat

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clapped them together. On this clapping the jumper had to spring in and out of the central square. The feat was to touch the ground and spring out before the bamboos could catch his ankles. If he was agile enough to avoid getting caught, it meant that the soul of the departed would have a safe journey to the place of his new abode. But if he was luckless enough to get caught, not only was he the subject of derision, but it boded no good for the soul on its travels.

As the game progressed and several of the young bucks wanted to show their prowess, the crowd grew hilarious with shouting and laughter. When Naw Su saw that her parents were asleep, she forgot she was in disgrace and ran down the ladder to get nearer to the fun. No one noticed her at first, but soon the other children discovered her and were glad to see her.

Now the elders decided that it was a good time to take the body away for burial. All children were forbidden to follow, lest their *kalas* might be lured away by the dead. They were ordered to keep out of sight until the body was buried. The children went quite reluctantly, for this was a great day for them, with all of its games and feasting.

Naw Su called to some of her pals and they followed her into the seclusion beneath her house. Here, though warned not to by their elders, they could peer through the cracks and enjoy all that was taking place. First, they watched the tearing out of the bamboo on the side of the dead man's house. The body must not be taken out through the

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door, for the spirit could too easily find its way back. As soon as the place was large enough, they lifted the body and passed it to the men waiting below to receive it.

Splints of bamboo were brought and passed under the shoulders and knees and tied loosely on top. Through these a stout bamboo was passed that was tied with thongs dipped in water to make them taut. The pole rested on the shoulders of the men who acted as pall bearers. A few of the women looked on and gave way to occasional bursts of grief. The men took the matter lightly and were continually joking with each other. They wanted to make the last journey of their old friend a jolly one.

When they had made the bier secure, they lifted the body conveniently high and started out, accompanied by the beating of the drum and the merry shouts of the men. Two of the men carried hoes with which to dig a shallow grave; another carried one or two extra garments, the cross-bow and other things that had belonged to the departed man. These must be left at the grave, otherwise the shade would wander back to find the things the man had while in the flesh. The spirits of the ancestors must be treated with care. They had the same characteristics in their new abode that they had while on earth—and often-times if things were not conducted according to their liking by their children, they did not turn over in their graves, as white men were said to do, but came back to torment their ungrateful sons.

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was dug in the forest, but she had watched the direction that they had taken and some day she would find the clothes and the cross-bow hung on a crude bamboo fence. It was wise to keep away from such places, however.

As soon as it began to get dark, she saw the men put back the side of the house that had been removed and carefully repair the place so that no one could detect that it had ever been removed. Now the spirit could not find its way back to disturb the household. The old customs had been observed, and life could now resume its normal aspect. But the people of the village would be conscious of one more inhabitant of the spirit world to be appeased. What little comfort there was in life. Food was scarce and hard to get. Devils were all about to tempt the unwary. Life was full of pain and disease, for which there was no remedy. The medicine men could not avert death. There was so much to fear. Yet even though life was a pain and struggle it must go on until all the living eventually passed to the upside down land. There it was hoped that fortune would take the place of hardship, but who knew?

For poor little Naw Su life had lost all joy. This calamity had come about because of her. Now that the excitement of the funeral was over, and there was nothing else to take the attention of the village, what would they do to her? She could only wait and see.

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CHAPTER V

SEVERAL years had passed since the escapade of Naw Su at the house of death, and she had really begun to grow up. Her skin was now an olive brown. Comely legs were lengthening beneath the dirty long *hsay* that she wore, and her body was beginning to show curved lines. Her eyes held the same mischievous sparkle, her hair was still unkempt. She was beginning to dress up. There were rows of beads, mostly of the white seeds known as Job's tears. Her mother had given her several strings to help keep the *kala* from escaping from the body.

She was called on to share more and more of the family burden. She helped to care for the pigs and chickens—women's work. She took her *dah* and went out with other budding girls to cut bamboos and fallen branches of trees. They would bind the fuel with rattan and carry it home on their heads. They set it in a corner near the fireplace to have it in readiness to cook the family rice.

One eventful day, as the girls were cutting bamboo near the path that led off toward the setting sun, two men came along. They saw at once that they were strangers, for their smocks were embroidered in a different pattern from those worn by the

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One eventful day, as the girls were cutting bamboo near the path that led off toward the setting sun, two men came along. They saw at once that they were strangers, for their smocks were embroidered in a different pattern from those worn by the

men of their own Tee Wa village. The frightened girls were on the point of running away, for in their hills every stranger was a potential enemy, when one of them called out in their own dialect, "Do not be afraid, little nieces. We are friends. We have come to visit the elders of Tee Wa village. Are we on the right path to the houses?"

The other girls wanted to run, but Naw Su motioned for them to be still, then she turned to the strangers and said: "Keep on this path, and when you come to the top of the ridge, take the south fork, and that will take you into the village." The men went on. The other girls were amazed at her boldness. They said they were so frightened that they could not say a word. She regarded them with flashing eyes as she replied, "We Karens are afraid of everything, of the demons, of the tigers and elephants, of anyone from the outside. I do not see why we must always be afraid. They did not look like bad men. They spoke Karen. They were not like the wicked Burmans. Let us hurry and get a load of firewood. I think they will have interesting things to tell. I want to hear something about the outside world."

The oldest girl retorted, as she helped Naw Su to raise her bundle to her head, "You are the strangest girl in the village. You are always running to find out things. Why don't you take them as they come and follow the old customs without asking questions? The old folks say that you are a nuisance because you are always trying to find out about things that no one knows."

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When they returned to the village, the strangers were talking to three old men who had not gone to the fields. They were being slyly questioned, for it was best to know about people before being too friendly with them.

"What village are you from?"

"I am from the Honey Bee village, the one just before you go down to the plains."

"I am from the little village just below that one," added the other. "My friend is one of the elders of Honey Bee village. His name is Saw Nya Gale."

He told the older man's name because a Karen always fears to mention his own name, especially if he is getting old, for to do so calls the attention of the demons, and if they once began giving him attention it would be to entice his *kala* away, and that would surely bring on some kind of illness.

The elder man told the younger's name in turn, after which they were invited up to the house of one of the elders. As they squatted on a mat, the host shoved them the much besmeared betel box that contained everything for making a chew. It was an indication that they were being cordially received as guests.

Naw Su found occasion to go in and out of the house many times while they were enjoying their chew. She wanted to learn what had brought them to the village. She lingered long over the fireplace in the pretense that she had come to borrow coals with which to start her own fire. Again, she asked if they had water enough to cook rice for their guests. Thus she managed to get an inkling of what

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was going on. Finally she sat down behind the partition and listened while the men talked. The glimpse of the big world beyond the mountain was intensely intriguing.

There were duties to be performed during the day. As the sun set Naw Su must care for the pigs and chickens, then she must cook the rice. Her mother had many plans for keeping her busy, for the busier she was the less apt she was to do some outrageous thing to stir up the *nats* or insult the other villagers. Naw Su was too active for a girl. Her mother hoped she could make her behave herself and that the boy they had selected for her husband when she had grown up would accept her. She was anxious to get her married, for then the responsibility for her conduct would fall on her man. She hoped he would keep her under control, even if he had to beat her, for that might be the only way to make her settle down and become a good woman.

In the evening after they had eaten their rice, the men wandered over to the house where the strangers were staying, for they would spend the night in the village. Naw Su slipped over along with the rest. She sought an obscure place back in the shadows away from the flickering torches, but she could hear every word that was being said.

Evidently there was trouble down on the plains. The arrogant Burmans, who had so often made forays into the Karen country, were being beaten by the white foreigners who had come from very far away to the west over great waters in fire ships.

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These were wonderful contraptions that belched out smoke like a forest fire. They must have flame in their bellies. They had round things on their sides that rolled through the water, no matter how swift the current. They had brought a lot of warriors and their guns were made of huge logs of wood or big stems of iron and they could shoot for miles. They had great chiefs who could mow down whole regiments of Burmans. Now the bad Burmans were being punished for what they had done to the Karens.

The fire ships went right up the big river, and they paid no attention to the big guns that the Burmans had made of teak logs and set along the banks of the river. They had pushed through to Mandalay and had walked right into the sacred palace of the Burmese king and had taken him out and had put him and the queen on one of the fire ships and had carried them off on one of the ships and no one had been able to stop them.

After the king had been captured, the Burmese soldiers had all scattered. They did not dare to face the foreigners. They had not been paid by the king. They saw his government go to pieces and so they had scattered through the villages, where they robbed the people, burned the houses and carried off all of the rice and such money as they could find. Things were in a very bad state with the Burmans. The whole country was full of fear. Villages that had not been burned were negotiating with the dacoits and paying them money and rice to keep them from burning and looting houses.

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This was most exciting to Naw Su. She had been told that the Burmese king was called the Lord of the White Elephant, the Lord of the Sky and the Universe, and all sorts of wonderful names, and yet he had been easily taken by the white foreigners. It seemed that things were not secure.

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CHAPTER VI

REMARKED the chief of Tee Wa village, as he was squatting around the betel box with the men of his village, "Those white foreigners in Toungoo surely are queer fellows." They had just returned from a trip to the city for barter. "They have such white skins. They never get out into the sun and work. They wear tight clothes. Their *bos* (chiefs) give orders to everyone and expect them to run and do whatever they say. They all kept together and walked to the music of their horns and drums as if all of them were just one man. Perhaps that was what helped them to keep together so well. It is strange how they do it. I never saw or heard anything like it. I wanted to stand and look and listen, but one of the big, dressed up fellows told us to move on. We were standing where they were coming."

"Were the rest of you frightened of them?" asked one of the younger men. "I was and I wanted to get back to the safety of our hills, but I could never get enough of the music that they played, and their walking together seemed to be a part of it all. I wanted to see their guns, but they would not let us get near them. It was all so strange

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and terrifying. I am willing to keep to the good old ways of our ancestors."

"Many of them have long, thick beards," remarked another, as he stroked a few straggling hairs on his chin. "They must know how to feed them. They are grand and they make them look fierce."

"You do not have a beard. You just think you have. It is your good luck that you have a mole that has grown a few hairs." This from a bold young man who dared to make fun of an elder.

"I met one man among the white foreigners who seemed to be different," added their host. "He said he was one of our 'younger brothers,' and that he had been sent across the sea in a ship with great white wings to find us. He asked all about our village, and said he would like to come and visit us."

"Strange that they should want to do that," said an elder. "Those white men could not even walk up and down our hills. They would get all tired out."

"But they ride on horses," ventured another. "They can come—and the people down below tell us that they bring many things. They have special dishes to eat out of. They take off all of their clothes at night and put on others that are very thin. Then they put on many blankets to keep warm. They wash their hands and faces before they eat and they wash themselves all over in the streams every day. I wonder what one of them wants to come up here for. We follow the customs of our ancestors and we do not want to change."

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"He had a lot of the children from the village below us, and they were learning to read out of books. How do you suppose they got them?"

"I do not know, but we can expect anything now that these strange foreigners have come to the country. I hear that they are taking over the land to eat it (govern it) instead of allowing the Burmese king to do it. He would never send his soldiers up here into the hills, for this is the Karen country, and we have always been able to kill the Burmans off before they got this far."

"We stopped in some of the villages in the low hills, and they have sent their children into town to learn to read books. They tell us we Karens will become more powerful when we have learned how to make books talk to us. I cannot understand how a book could make us more powerful. We can now drive off the Burmans. They are afraid of our cross-bows now that we have learned to tip the arrows in medicine."

While they were talking some of the boys had gathered around to hear the strange tales that the men had brought back from the city. The most of them, like the older men, were indifferent to new things. They wanted to keep on in the ways set down for them by their ancestors. To change was to run into many strange demons and to court the danger of bringing famine and pestilence to their village. Better to let all strange things alone. The girls were especially fearful. They went about carrying water joints or wood on their backs or their younger brothers and sisters on their hips

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and paid no attention to the strange, excited talk of the men. Naw Su was the exception. She might be sitting on the floor pretending to help with the cooking, but she was eagerly listening to every word. She wanted to ask many questions, but she knew the men would not pay any attention to a mere girl, so she sat quietly and mulled over everything that was said.

She wondered what the music was like that they had heard the soldiers play on their horns and drums. Was it like the funeral songs that the Karen used to sing? How could a lot of men walk as if they were but one man? What were skins for the feet, as they called the foreign shoes, like? Would she ever have a chance to take the long four days' walk down to the city and see things for herself? Perhaps when they again went to buy salt and Burmese *ngapi* (fish condiment) she would get a chance to go. She would coax her parents and make a big fuss until she wore them down. She could carry a basket of betel nuts and bring salt up on her back.

My, but it would be a thrilling new experience to go and see all of the country over the ridge, to see the city where there were so many houses built close together, to see the white and black foreigners and the fire ships on the river. Were there really demons in all of those things? Would they bring harm to all, as so many women had said?

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might not talk so much about it but questions were becoming more and more insistent in her mind. She just had to find out about the country beyond her own village. She had been over the ridge once to the village toward the north, but the people there were not too friendly. They fed them, to be sure, as all Karens were supposed to do, but they were of a different clan and it was not wise to get too familiar with them. Were the strangers in the big city like that?

One day, when the nights were getting cold and clear and the harvest of rice was nearly all beaten out, Naw Su brought in a basket of the newly winnowed paddy. As she set the narrow-bottomed carrying basket against the wall, she saw a strange man sitting on the mat. He was talking to her father over the betel box. When she had freed herself from the strap of the basket, her father turned to her saying, "Go down to the field and get a basket of betel nuts for the stranger. There are no more in the house."

As she started to obey, the man was saying, "You know our ancestors believed in one God who was our father-creator. He told us through the old *wee* (prophets) that some day He would come back to us and that He would send us the book."

The father gave Naw Su a significant look. She knew she must gather up her basket and be gone at once. As she went down the ladder, she was thinking, what a strange thing to say. She had often heard the elders tell the story of the Father-God, but when she asked her mother and the other

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women about it, they would say that no doubt there was a God who made the mountains and all things, but it was wise to pay more attention to the devils that were all about. Perhaps the people, Naw Su reasoned, did not have time to pay attention to the God who was so far off. They had also forgotten what he said because they had no book. Now that they had been turned over to the big devil and all of the little ones, there was enough to worry about. He might come back some day, but that was very uncertain. The women said they had better not bother about the probability. They had all they could do to keep on the right side of the demons all around them.

This man seemed different from anyone she had ever known. He was so sure about God. She ran down the hill with her basket rattling about her. She quickly filled it from the pile of nuts on the ground among the tall palms, and slinging it around her neck and over her back, she gathered her flapping *hsay* around her hips and ran up the hill. She was determined to hear more of what the stranger was saying.

She sat the basket down and pretended to work. By this time several other men had joined the party. They tore off the husks of the nuts until the kernels were cleared. Then they cracked them open so that they could be more easily crushed by their blackened teeth.

"God has not entirely forgotten us," said the stranger. He was a small man, dressed in a smock that was cleaner than those worn by the men of the

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village. Tee Wa villagers wore their old smocks until they were ready to fall off of them, and then their wives wove new ones. The stranger was not so thin as the rest of the men, and he wore a white turban wound around his head. The hair that showed was oily and not coarse and unkempt like the hair of the village men and women. He had a broad face. His eyes were bright and sparkling. He seemed to shine as he talked. He carried a large bag, and some flat things showed against its red side.

Naw Su forgot that she was going to pretend to be busy and squatted down behind the fire and listened with marked attention. Here was something that was really interesting. Perhaps this man who seemed to be rather kind, for he had looked directly at her and his face had seemed to sparkle like the stars, would talk to her. She wanted to ask some questions. She leaned so far over that she almost fell into the fire when he said: "The younger white brother has surely come, and he has brought us the Book."

With this he stooped over and began fumbling at his bag. He took hold of one of the flat things and pulled it out. It was smooth and brown. Its edges were white. He took hold of one side and pulled on it and it opened up like a door. Naw Su had never seen such a thing. It looked attractive, and when it was open, the inside was white and it was all filled with very thin white doors with tiny black marks all over them, arranged in straight rows. The stranger opened more and more of the

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doors. It reminded Naw Su of the thin wrappings of bamboo when it first came up. They were soft and tough, for he could turn them back and forth. They were all hung together on one side.

Other children had crept in and they began to giggle at the strange new thing. It surely was queer, but Naw Su was too deeply interested to laugh. She slapped the others to keep them quiet lest the stranger should close it up and put it away.

“This is the book that our younger white brother never lost as did our ancestors. They have brought it back to us. They have given it to the Karens that live down by the sea, and they have sent me up here to tell you about it. It teaches about God, and how he created the world. Let me read you a few words to show you that it can talk, and that it now speaks our Karen language. Of course you know the Burmans have had books written on palm leaves for a long time, but we Karens have hung our heads in shame because we had no book. That is why they can learn about everything in the world, why they can force us to make the bricks for their walls, make us dig out their big teak logs to make canoes and never pay us anything. We have been slaves, but now we have the book and we can be free.”

Then turning back the thin little doors until they were all on one side, he said: “‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.’ That is just what it says. We have to believe, because it is also what the old poems that our forefathers used to recite told us. Then he repeated the old lines

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that Naw Su had heard her grandmother say. In the beginning:

*"Haw Ko keh taw th' bwe paw,
May m' ta tay m'ta byaw?"*

*Haw Ko ler pler may Ywa tay,
Ywa ma lo kaw me kaw say."*

"In the beginning who made the earth,
Who created and who made it?

In the beginning it was God who made the earth,
It was God who ordered each and every thing."

In her intense eagerness to see and hear all that was going on Naw Su had stooped over and had crawled on her hands and knees toward the stranger and his book. She was determined to touch it, to hold it in her hands. Before she had realized what she was doing, she had crept and wriggled her way in front of the men and was gazing at the treasure.

One of her uncles shouted at her, "Hey! You brat! Get out of the way! Can't you see that you are in front of your elders? You don't know anything. Get away, and keep away! He caught hold of her *hsay* and gave it such a yank that he almost tore it off of her.

She hastily returned to a less obtrusive place, but still her eyes shone with tears of joy, and her heart pounded so loudly that she was afraid all would

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hear. Her mind teemed with questions. Would she ever be able to see and to touch such a book? How could she do it? Would a way open some day?

Her mother had been informed by her uncle of her boldness, and she called from below for her to come down from the house. When they were alone, she was told that she must not meddle with things that she could not understand and that would never be any business of hers.

But the order to stay away did little good. In a few minutes Naw Su had crept back up the ladder and had stealthily edged her way to the front, for the stranger was still talking about the book and the interest was centered on him.

They sat far into the night. She was called upon several times to bring up fresh logs and stick the ends of them in the fire. Then she made it her business to be very attentive about pushing them in as fast as the ends were eaten off by the fire.

Wrapped in their thin cotton blankets the men discussed the book and their theories of God and their fear of the wily demons that were all around them. Fear had so gripped them that they did not dare heed anything new. The stranger kept repeating that the one great God was so powerful that he could set them free from their fears, and that he had sent the younger white brother to give them the book that they had been without so long that they had been driven into fear, bondage and poverty. They were right in thinking it was because of this that the Burmans had overcome them and set them to do hard tasks without pay, and to drive

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them back from the rivers where they could get no fish to eat.

"More than that," he continued, "this white brother, though he is younger than the Karen or the Burman, yet he seems to have a lot of power, for he has come across the wide sea in his great ships with white wings, and if we will but follow him, we shall have a strong people to help us. They are not afraid of the Burmans. They will tell us what to do. When the white man wants a thing done quickly, he shouts at the Burmans. When he gives them orders, they say '*Hokde Paya*' ('Yes, My Lord'). They fear the white people even more than we have feared them. I do not wonder. I never saw anything like the white foreigners. They walk quickly, they give commands with a loud voice and they frighten everybody. Just think what it will mean to us to be able to call such people our brothers."

The men of the village looked at one another and grunted approval. They admitted the need of someone like that to help them when they were being oppressed by the Burmans.

"Do you think the white brother will keep the Burmans from setting their dogs on us when we go down to the city to buy salt? They laugh and say to their dogs, 'There go the Karen dogs. Why don't you run after them and bark at them.' I do not want to go to the city again unless we have a friend there that will stop the people from laughing at us and calling us dogs."

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interested in the book and the stranger to take time to send the children off to bed. They kicked at them and scolded them when they got in the way of their elders but they were not sent away. The eager Naw Su had to be driven back any number of times, but her interest was so great that she very soon returned, and her bright eyes were continuously shifting from the face of the stranger to the book that he held. When he laid it down on the mat that he might use his hands to emphasize what he was saying, Naw Su reached forward and ran her fingers over the smooth pages. She drew back, breathless. Her whole body quivered with ecstasy, for she had touched the book and to her it held the mystery of earth and heaven. A kick from her father sent her back to her place, but nothing could efface the memory of the thrill that ran up and down her spine when she had first touched the book. What gave it such magic power that it could talk?"

When the men stopped to refill their mouths with betel, she rushed to the feet of the stranger. She had wanted to ask him a question all of the evening, and now was her time.

"Would that book talk for me, just as it does for you?" She was startled at the sound of her own voice, for it was high and shrill with excitement.

What was her joy when the stranger turned to her and said, "Yes, many girls down by the sea, where the white brother first came, have learned to read, and they are now teaching others. One reason that I came to these hills is to get boys to go down

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and learn to read the book and to be able to tell about the God of our fathers who has come to make us free. I have come after boys, but even if you are only a girl, since you seem to be so smart and eager, if you wish to go down to the city and learn to read, I will take you back with me. There is a school there where the girls as well as the boys can eat rice and sleep. They have a nice Mama from America to take care of them. She gives them medicine if they are sick. She will show you how to bathe and be clean. . . ."

Before he could finish what he was saying Naw Su surprised all of them by her boldness. She shouted, "I want to go. I want to see the white foreigner. I can look after myself. I am going. I want to know what the book says."

The outburst was followed by a chorus of rebuke. "Get back into your place. Girls can't do anything but raise children. Who ever heard of a girl that amounted to anything? What foolishness!"

She paid no attention to them. She had determined that she was going to learn to read the book if she had to walk all of the four days' journey to the city alone.

There was great talk on the following day. The visitor had spent the night in the village. When he got up at daylight, many of the men had already gone to their fields and betel gardens, but a few had lingered in the hope to satisfy their minds. Naw Su also hung around. The men were not yet certain whether the man was a fraud with some

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ulterior motive or whether he really was a teacher who had come to do them good. It was true that when they went to town a white man had told them that he was their younger brother, and that he had a school. They saw a number of Karen children there from the villages near the city. They said they were learning to read and to follow the younger brother's religion. They seemed to be having a good time. They were clean, fat and well fed. So far no harm had come to them.

Naw Su's mother called to her. "Have you fed the pigs? Did you let the hens out of their baskets?"

"Not yet, but I am going to do it soon," she called over her shoulder, but she still sat on.

Her mother shouted to her four times, but she still listened. "Why does that old mother have to bother me with such things as pigs and chickens," she said to another girl who was always her shadow. "I want to hear all about that place where they go to study. I am really going to the city. You watch and see. I don't care for the old *nats*. I have never seen one, and even if all of them stood right here and said I could not go, I would go. Come along if you would like."

"No! No! No!" replied the other. "We are only girls. We cannot travel. The *beloos* (Burmese demons) would get us. I am afraid."

"Don't say that. Keep still. You will put a log in front of me. I would roll it away or jump over, for I am going anyway."

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"You girls stop your talking and get out of here. Do your work. Go quickly."

"No," said Naw Su under her breath, as they made a pretense of obeying the command of the chief of the village. The stranger was saying, "I am going farther east. I will be back in five or six days, and if any of the children want to go to school to learn to read books and to learn about the religion of the younger white brother, I will take them along with me to school, if the parents are willing. They have nothing to fear. I am a travelling teacher, and I will take good care of them."

Then he threw the bag that contained the precious book over his shoulder, shook hands with the men and the old women, and explained that the white foreigner said good-bye that way. It meant that they were real friends. Then he went down the ladder and followed a road up the hill that they had told him would bring him to another village in four hours. He soon disappeared among the dense bamboos.

Naw Su watched him go with a heavy heart. If only she could have kept that precious book. If only she had been a little less afraid, she might have taken it and hidden it beneath the mat and he might have gone and left it. Would he come back, as he had promised, and could she persuade her parents to let her go and learn? How wonderful it would be if she had a book and could make it talk to her.

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their baskets, and then she climbed the ladder to bring down the smelly joint of stuff that her mother had cooked for the pigs. As she poured it out into the trough and let the pigs out of the pen, she was muttering to herself, "I have just got to go with that teacher. I will manage some way to get around father and mother so that they will give their permission, or I will run away."

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CHAPTER VII

NAW SU was shouting at her outraged parents in angry, hurt tones. "I am not afraid of your old *nats*. I am going to school and learn to read the book. They say it will make us free. I won't stay here any longer. I want to learn. I am going to learn. I won't keep still. I will go. I am going to follow the teacher. What he says is true. I am going with him and you can't stop me. I will run away."

All that the parents could do with the little parental authority that they possessed over this storm-born child was useless. The more they tried to hinder her, the more determined she was to have her way.

"You do not know anything. You are only a girl. The white foreigners will eat you, and there are all of the devils on the way down the hills. The family *bgha* will be angry and we will be visited with sickness. You will be the cause of our death. Be quiet and content to stay here." The dark lines on the face of the father betokened terrible fear as he spoke. Never before had a girl shown such disobedience and such determination to leave the common run of duties. All the effort of his life to avoid the attention of the devils was now upset. There

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would be sickness. Their meager crop would dry up. He would be disgraced among the fellow villagers. "What a terrible condition has been brought on us by this brat. I will beat her until the devils get out of her belly." The Karens consider the belly the seat of the emotions. "We will not let her disturb our lives this way."

The mother changed her betel chew from one cheek to the other. "That girl is a storm. She never does what the others do. She flaunts her elders all of the time. I am very much ashamed of her. I scold her continually, but she will not listen. I think she has a demon in her. It must have gotten into her when she was born in that wind and rain. We should have made more offerings to the '*Ti K'Sa Kaw K'Sa*'; then those Lords of the Land would have given her a more pliable heart. Now we can do nothing about it."

"Can't we make some offering now? Do you suppose the medicine man could give her something that would make her more obedient?"

"It might be, but she has been this way ever since she began to talk, and she gets worse every day. The older she gets, the stronger the demon grows, and it gets more and more hold on her."

"Well," said the father in resignation, "she is only a girl. Perhaps we had better let her go. Then we can make a feast for the *bgah* and tell them that she is dead and they will eat the pork and be so pleased that they will let us alone. Things are pretty dangerous with her here, and that makes it hard for us. We are poor ignorant Karens, and what do we

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know about all of the devils that lurk about to pounce down upon us and bring us harm? A mere girl is not of much value. We had better let her go."

But the mother still held out. "I cannot let her go and be a slave to foreigners. There is no way to know what they will do to her. No, I will not let her go. I will beat her, and if necessary I will tie her up to keep her away from that teacher. Her *kala* must not be enticed away by him. Every storm has passed and gone. This one will too. I will keep her here at home, tie her up so she can not run away and we will betroth her to that young white buffalo." White buffalo was the Karen name for an eligible young man.

When Naw Su rolled off of her mat the next morning and began to rub her eyes, her mother was waiting beside the fireplace. She must begin to cower the girl at once and hinder any plan that she might make to go off to school.

"Eat your breakfast and take your basket and go out on the hillside and find some greens for dinner. Get a big lot. Fill your basket, and do not hang around here today. Eat and go quickly."

Naw Su put down the water joint from which she had washed her face, and taking the cover off of the black rice pot, she began stuffing rice into her mouth in generous chunks. She looked at her mother with hard, steely eyes. She sensed at once that this was a part of her mother's plan to keep her busy and drive the thought of going down to the city out of her head. If that was her idea, she had chosen the worst possible tactics. They were

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two women pitting their wills against each other. One was old and fearful and only putting on a bold front to conceal her fears. The other was young, bold, and she was just beginning to find herself. A great purpose surged through the active young mind. She was untrammelled by the taboo that held the other woman.

The mother expected an outburst and she had her eye on a good stout bamboo with which to meet it. To her surprise and relief Naw Su took up the basket, passed its strap over her forehead, picked up the *dah* that she always carried and started down the ladder without a word. This left the mother with a great feeling of uncertainty. Had she changed her mind and had she abandoned the threat to go to the white foreigners? She could not figure it out and finally forgot to worry as she piled firewood on the family hearth.

As Naw Su thoughtfully trudged down the path that led from the village to the spring and then on to the green places down by the creek where the water was rippling from pool to pool, she found new plants with bright green leaves. They were spicy and tender, and they would be nice to eat with the evening rice. This had always been the playground of the village children. Here she could wander about as she liked. She could slip off her dirty *hsay* and play in the water. She could chase the frogs into the shallow pools. She could fashion a bamboo ring for her head and climb a tree for orchids and pretend she was a lady. She played around all the morning, but her mind was wander-

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Suddenly something seemed to click. She felt a strange sensation come up into her throat. Her blood began to surge into her temples, and her heart seemed to grow big. She pounded a tree with her *dah*. "I will go! I am not going to stay here and be a poor ignorant Karen like the rest of them! I will read the book until I know why I am not afraid, then I will help the others to get free."

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seemed to prompt her to say nothing when she saw her parents. Karens are a people of few words. They keep all thoughts that do not run in the usual channels to themselves. She did not stay around the house much for the next few days. The other children played about, but she slung her basket over her shoulder every morning and went out to the forest. She wanted to be alone. They chided her at home, calling her *Naw Kali Heh* (the wind comes). They were always referring to the storm in which she was born. Each member of the household sensed that there was a storm brewing whenever they saw her.

One day, as she walked along the street busy with her thoughts and wishing she could see the teacher and ask him the questions that were more and more crowding her mind, she remembered that he had inquired the way to the next village toward the east. He had said that he was going up there for a few days and that he would come back through their village. A thought raced through her brain. It was about time for him to be back. The way to that village was on the side of the mountain, and there were green trees along the path.

A plan instantly matured. "I will go over there and wait and watch by that path. I will stop him and find out if they really do take girls like me in that school. I will ask to go with him." She gathered up her scattered greens that she had let fall where she had cut them from the trees, flung her basket over her shoulder and hacked and felled everything that would hinder her from quickly reaching the

path. Even now the man might be passing. What if she should miss him? She must not let that happen. If he should reach the village, she could never get a chance to talk to him. If she could only see him out here, there would be no one to hinder.

All of the rest of that day she kept her eyes on the path. Every noise, every movement caught her attention. Two or three travelling traders came along, but no teacher. Night came on, and with a start she realized she had dreamed and dallied all day. Now, disappointed, she filled her basket in frantic haste and hurried to the village. Her mother must not suspect that she had been idly waiting.

The next day she went toward the south when she left the village, for she knew that no one could come from the other village before the sun was half way up in the sky. By that time she could make a wide circuit and station herself where she could see the path a long way down the hillside.

All day she waited and she was just about to return to the village in the late afternoon when her keen, jungle-trained eyes caught the shadows of several persons who were following the path. Now and then they went behind a bunch of bamboos or they were hidden behind little knolls, then they emerged. She saw that one of them was the teacher from the city and there were four or five boys following him. Why such a large party? They all had bundles on sticks that hung over their shoulders.

At first she was frightened, for it was usually better to hide and let strangers pass. She crouched

down behind a clump of bamboos and watched them approach with the feeling that they were going to change every thing in her life. Again the terrific desire to learn to read the book impelled her and she ran toward the path before she realized what she was doing. They stopped abruptly when they first saw her, but when they realized that it was only a girl and she was all alone, they hurried along. The teacher recognized her as the girl who had been so curious about the book the night he had stopped in the village of Tee Wa. He asked the usual question, "Where are you going?"

At first Naw Su was so overcome by joy and gratitude that she could not answer. But she must answer, so she gave the usual response, "I am going no where."

By this time the file had been brought to a halt. She saw that the boys were all looking at her very eagerly. They each carried rather large bundles as though they were going on a visit. They stared at each other for a minute, which seemed like an hour to Naw Su. She suddenly blurted out, "I want to go to school!" Then she was at loss for anything more to say.

The teacher replied, "These boys are going to school, but I did not expect to take any girls back with me, yet there are girls from down country in the school. They are eating the school rice. There is no reason why you should not go if your parents would give their consent."

"They say it will disturb the *nats* if I go. I must not leave the village, but I want to go." Then she

gained the courage to say the words that she had said to herself a thousand times while wandering in the jungle: "I will go! Don't stop me!"

The man was pleased, but he was afraid to encourage her, for fear the village would organize a raid and stop him if he took her without the consent of her parents. They might even kill him for kidnapping a child. It would be better to play safe since this was his first trip up into the wild hills. He must go slow. To arouse envy or suspicion now might mean the defeat of his enterprise. The white teacher had cautioned him, and it appealed to his Karen common sense.

Turning to the girl with the eager look in her starry eyes, he said, "I am glad you want to go to school, but I must talk to your parents and to the elders of your village. If they agree, we will take you along, but you must be patient and wait for us to talk the matter over."

With that he started on and the boys all followed, but they looked back to see a forlorn figure with downcast eyes. She was digging into the hard soil with her great toe.

A few men were interested enough to sit on the mat with the stranger and talk to him that evening. They asked where the boys that were following him were going, and what they expected to do. He told them they were going to follow him down the mountains to the city, that they would stay down there until after the rainy season had passed and go to school.

The men thought it was too bad for them to go

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The men thought it was too bad for them to go

away when they could help to care for the growing rice. Boys were a great help in keeping away the birds and the wild pigs. Others were interested in the news that the man had brought; if it was really true that the younger white brother had come and brought the book, it would be a good thing if they could learn to read it and be freed from the Burmans. They might get the white brother to help them about the new taxes that they were trying to collect in the hills.

The teacher asked if any of the boys in the village were thinking about going to the school. The elders told him there were none. After discussing the possibility of any one of the boys wanting to go and the pros and cons of education and reading, the teacher cautiously mentioned that some girls had come down to school. No one responded to the idea. Girls were not of much use. They could not raise children any better by learning to read. It was useless to send them to school. They did not see why the white foreigner should care to bother with girls.

The teacher explained that they could be taught to read, and that they could teach other children, but all that he said fell on deaf, uncomprehending ears.

Naw Su had kept within earshot of the group, but she had been careful not to make herself too conspicuous, lest she arouse the ill will of her elders and they would watch her movements out of fear and spite. She did not intend to have her well-formulated plan thwarted.

The teacher remarked, "When I was here before, there was a girl that was much interested in the book. She said she wanted to go to school and learn to read it." He did not betray Naw Su by saying that she had seen him on the path, and he had warned the boys with him to keep the secret.

"You mean that Naw Su. She is a little devil. She never wants to do what the rest of us are doing. She is always breaking the customs of our fathers. She was born when the great wind came a few years ago and she has always been a storm center. It would be a help if she could be taught to follow the ways of our ancestors."

The father, who had been sitting and brooding over something all of the evening, remarked that she had been more quiet lately. Perhaps the devil had left her. He had no intention of allowing her to do anything rash. Perhaps in a few years she would marry and settle down as her sisters had done.

All of this time Naw Su had listened intently. She hoped they would decide to consent for her to follow the teacher. That would make it easy. Anyhow she had planned to get out early in the morning, to go along the path that the teacher must take and join him there. She would be cautious and keep out of sight until he was so far on the road that he would not want to take her back.

But now a storm suddenly broke in her mind, and she rushed out from her hiding place and threw herself down before the teacher and cried, "I want

to go! Take me, teacher! I don't want to stay here. I want to learn to read. I hate the devils! I believe there is a God! Please take me. I will follow you and I will make no trouble."

CHAPTER VIII

THE teacher tarried a day in Naw Su's village, although the boys were keen to get on and learn to read the newly found book. He caught the eager light in Naw Su's eyes and recognized her great desire to learn. He knew enough about the Karen people to realize that when a child sets out to get anything, it is usually rewarded for its persistence, and that the parents that make the biggest show in opposing such children usually yield in the end. So the teacher patiently waited. The elders were divided, some wanting the child to go that they might be freed from the dangers that might arise from her breaking of the taboos, others were strong for retaining all of the old customs and for taking steps to break the girl's spirit. With this division of opinion, he saw there was a good chance that the girl would join the party, if he sat around and gave silent consent to her going.

The morning of the second day of his stay the air was cold and crisp. In the high ranges there was a great difference between the cold morning air and the sun-heated atmosphere of the afternoon. Before he had rolled out of his thin blanket, he heard steps on the ladder of the house. There was a creaking of bamboo around the cooking place and

he could smell burning wood. There was another sound and as he looked toward the opening that served as a door, he saw Naw Su step cautiously on to the floor. She had a bundle under her arm. He lost no time in jumping up. He gathered his blanket, folded it and stuffed it into his bag. As he did so, he said in a very low tone, "I see you have permission to go. Shall we start as soon as we have eaten a bit of rice?"

"I am going. I want to start now," she replied in a strained voice. "Mother and father did not exactly give permission, but they said nothing when I began putting my blanket into my bag. I have eaten. I have gone. Follow me quickly. Take the path to the west. I will see you by the river-crossing." She was at the foot of the ladder by the time she had finished her words. She slipped into the jungle nearest the house and was out of sight.

By this time the boys, who had been sleeping huddled together near the fireplace to keep warm, began to wiggle. One of them threw off his blanket and said, "Teacher, can we start now?"

"Yes, we will go soon, but we must first eat rice, for it is a long way and there are no villages for many posts."

"What do you mean by posts?"

"That is what the foreigners say. They set posts all along the way and call the distance between them miles. That is the way we learn to tell distance on the plains."

In a few minutes all of the boys had untangled themselves, and after pouring a little cold water

from a bamboo joint into their hands and rubbing it on their faces, they sat down by the teacher. Naw Su had brought in some plantain leaves the night before to serve as plates and her mother silently spread them on the floor and filled them with steaming hot rice. They ate heartily, throwing great white balls that were almost as large as eggs into their mouths. They were careful not to get any of the grains stuck to their fingers above the first knuckle. That would have been very bad manners. It did not take them long to fill their stomachs, and then they filled their mouths with water from the containers and ejected it in a stream through the cracks in the floor to clear out any portion that might have stuck to the teeth.

The teacher tried to shake hands with the host who had given him and his boys hospitality. But the man sat as stolid as a graven image. Naw Su was nowhere to be seen. The father knew as well as the teacher that she had crept out with the dawn, but neither of them made any reference to her. What could a father do with such a stormy daughter? The teacher was wise enough to accept the situation without a word, though his heart was bursting with the satisfaction of bringing in a new pupil for the school and helping another Karen out of the stagnation of village life.

As they were walking single file out of the village enclosure, the teacher led the way. They took the path to the west. The teacher looked along both sides where the jungle grew right up to the way, but he could see nothing of Naw Su. Had she run out

to avoid going with him and to save his face after all the preliminary talk? They went on several hundred yards. No sign of the girl. He kept his worries to himself, but where was she? They came to the river. It was tumbling over the smooth stones that made its bed. Still no Naw Su. He stopped and looked around carefully but saw no sign of life except a group of monkeys that were gathering the fruit from some tall trees. He let the boys go on into the river. As they forded it, he waited wondering where the girl could be. It was not till they mounted the bank on the other side that he caught sight of Naw Su in the thicket beside the road.

"I did not dare to stop till I had crossed the river," Naw Su remarked breathlessly as she joined the party and followed on behind the boys. None of them spoke a word as they trudged up the hill. For Naw Su who was trembling with suppressed emotion it was indeed a "going west." It would be months before she would again see her village. She was taking the first steps that would make her almost a stranger to her people. It was the lull before the storm, which would some day sweep through the mountains, blowing down much that was old and giving the new a chance.

The first ten miles was through land that was owned by her village. She knew the hills where each family had cultivated rice for the past three or four years. She saw the patches where the jungle had regained some of its wild growth since the clearings were made the previous year.

The cultivation extended all the way up the sides of the steep mountains. There was no level ground in sight.

She remembered the delight with which she had watched her father and mother cut the jungle the year before. It was the first time she had really noticed what was going on. They began at the bottom of the hill and worked toward the top. They chopped the tree trunks partly through, leaving less than half of the trunk to hold up the tree. When they had covered the entire plot in this way, they cut the big trees in certain positions at the top of the ridge and they fell, striking those lower down. In that way the entire tract was cleared at one fell swoop. She had never heard so much noise as was made by the snapping of trunks, the crackling of branches and the bursting of bamboos all the way down the hillside. She remembered how the sight had made her dance with glee.

It was great fun for her when they fired the timbers at the end of the hot, dry season. She remembered that her parents had consulted the medicine man as to when to fire the cuttings. They were told to find a day when the moon was right and the rains were just around the mountain, for the fire might be driven by an unusual high wind, catch in the surrounding dry forest, run over the whole mountain area and do a lot of damage. They not only got a date from the wise man, but they watched the sky very carefully to see that the clouds did not fool them and wet the mountain before they could burn the brush. If this happened, it would mean that

they would have no rice to eat the following year. The demons were generously fed and satisfied lest they bring such a calamity upon them. Again she had danced for joy when the red flame shot up from the dry bamboo. The popping of the hollow stem as the air expanded and blew itself out could be heard for miles. It was always to be one of the outstanding events in the memory of her childhood.

When they dropped down into the valley, she saw where the little stream, in which she had often gone fishing, emptied itself. It was quite a wide river, and as ever she was fascinated by the rush of the water over the smooth stones. They went down the steep bank in single file and stepped into the water. As each did so an "ouch" escaped. They stumbled and slipped on the smooth wet stones. As they went in deeper, they gathered up their *hsays* and tucked them around their waists. Their bare brown legs shone as the water splashed on them. None of them wore anything but the one loose garment that could be tucked up or discarded if it got in the way. Then came the long climb up from the river and through the ravine that the torrential tropical rains had been carving out through the centuries.

The Karens make straight forward paths like ants. They do not go around their mountains, or seek easier ways to cross their ridges. Their thighs are well rounded and their muscles are full and well developed. They climb up and down with ease, but it tires them to walk long level distances.

Naw Su did not mind the steep path. Her bundle

was not heavy, for she had little in it, only her blanket and one *hsay*. On the steepest ascents her long single garment got under her feet and she wanted to pull it off, but that would make another bundle to carry and she did not know her travelling companions as she did the boys in her own village. She did not want to strip, although some of the smaller boys did so. She was going to school, and she was beginning to take heed of her actions.

On and on they trudged, never stopping, never complaining. When they came to water that trickled from the mountain side, they made a cup of their hands and drank their fill while the teacher pulled a leaf off of the wild caladium and made a conical cup in which the water shone like quicksilver.

For Naw Su there was a wonderful sense of release. No longer the old cry of her parents not to do this and not to do that, or to stop talking lest it anger the *nats*. Perhaps there were no *nats* in the country to which she was going. She would be free. She would learn to read the book. Perhaps, some day, she would go back and show the old folks in her village how wonderful it was to be free and to have a new world in which to live. Finally the teacher called a halt, and as she lay beneath a large banyan, she dropped into a sweet sleep and rested as unconsciously as though she was a mountain nymph that was back on the breast of mother earth after a dance through the forest. Soon the pipes of Pan would arouse her to new adventures.

It was not the pipes of Pan that caused her to

stir, but the teacher. It meant harder climbing and new vistas of tumbled mountains. She gathered up her bundle and followed the boys along the mountain path that was almost obscured by the bamboo and other light growth between the immense forest trees.

They had not gone far when there was a stirring in the dry leaves near the path and the first boy stopped short, crying, "Cobra!" The cobra had been waiting for game and was alert in its hunger. Its long body curled, and it threw up its head while the slender neck spread to make a wide hood. Then it lifted its head to the height of a full cubit and swayed from side to side while its beady eyes shone in expectancy of prey. It was ready to swallow quickly, then it could take time to digest. The boys were trained to jungle ways and each stopped in his tracks. They knew the snake would not attack while they remained motionless. The teacher carried no cross-bow with which to shoot. His *dah* was his only weapon. He was sure he could kill the reptile with it if necessity required, but as he stood there, the snake tired of holding himself erect and, seeing no motion anywhere, gradually dropped his hood, fell prone upon the ground, and slid down the hill. They passed on and the incident was soon forgotten.

Although they had been climbing for two days, they were not tired. They had gained the height by a series of long ups and short downs, so that different sets of muscles had been called into action. Finally they reached the top of the ridge. The

teacher led them to one side where there was a rice clearing in the forest, and told them to look off toward the west. Never before had they beheld such a sight. The mountains dropped abruptly and a wide undulating plain spread before them that seemed to reach out endlessly. Since they had never seen anything but mountains, great masses rising and falling, it was a breath-taking sight.

"What is that?" cried Naw Su. "Is it clouds covering the low hills?" She had been accustomed to look down on low-lying clouds from her mountain home.

"That is the plain," replied the leader. "Burma is not all hills and mountains. There are broad stretches of level land along the big rivers. The Burmans live there and raise rice. They have great fields and do not have to burn mountain jungle. They plow with their buffaloes while the water is standing on the ground during the rainy season."

"Don't they have to cut the jungle every year and burn the dry trees the way we do?" queried Naw Su.

"No, they do very differently from your people. You will soon see."

"What do you mean by plowing and using buffaloes?"

"The plow is a big stick with a crook in it and the short part is pointed into a sharp beak like a hornbill's head. They hitch the buffaloes to the long end and make them drag it through the mud. That turns the dirt over and makes it soft so they can plant their rice."

The children all laughed. That seemed like a queer way to them. Why did they do it? Was it easier than to plant with their hands on the hillsides? Of course buffaloes could carry heavier loads than men and women, and perhaps they could plant more rice, but they could not understand how it was done.

The teacher called attention to a winding, ribbon-like line that ran through the plain. He told them that was a big river and the school to which they were going was on its bank. "You cannot see the buildings from here, for the trees hide the buildings. The school is still many miles away and we shall have to walk fast if we get there by tomorrow night."

They hurried back to the path that wound around the side of the mountain and went down, down, down. It seemed that they would never reach the bottom. That night they slept in a village where the land was beginning to get level. Some of the people there had sent their children to school and they were interested in Naw Su, for they had two girls that were trying to learn.

Some of the elders were very cordial, for they said they knew the white brother had come as a messenger from God. He was the real God of their fathers, but he had only now taken notice of them. The next morning, after they had eaten a good meal of rice and chicken, they all sat around on a mat and the elder of the village joined with the teacher in reading a few lines from the book. Then they all bowed their heads and the elder prayed that

God would bless them as they went to school for the first time.

They found the day's walk very tiring, for there were no hills to relieve their muscles. There were a few little ups and downs, but it was mostly on the level. They went right on step after step with no change of muscular strain. When they came to a stream, they all plunged into the refreshing water. They took off their only garment, a *hsay*. Their light brown bodies glistened in the sunlight as they basked in the cooling stream. The teacher kept urging them to hurry on, so it was not quite sunset when they came to the bank of the river.

It flowed between high banks. They could see the city. There was a big thing that the teacher called a boat in the water near the bank. He shouted to a man in a strange language that they soon learned was Burmese. The man got into the rocking thing and came along beside them. As Naw Su obeyed her teacher and stepped into the boat, it seemed to give way beneath her and she almost fell. The teacher caught her by the arm and she dropped down on the board seat. The man pulled a queer kind of long stick through the water, and they were soon climbing up a steep bank on the opposite side. A lot of buildings surrounded by a fence loomed up before them.

"There is your school!" cried the teacher.

CHAPTER IX

CINDERELLA had no greater problem of knowing what was proper to do in the Prince's palace than did Naw Su when she found herself in the Christian school. She had never seen such a big building. Instead of shaky bamboo, it was built of teakwood. The boards were wide and as smooth as the stones in the river. It looked very grand and seemed more like a place for kings than for ordinary human beings. There was no tall grass growing about the house and there were no pigs running under the bushes. The gate was not like the crude bamboo-plaited squares that she had used at home to keep the pigs in their pen. It was wooden and had something that held it on one side and it swung to and fro. She wanted to stop and swing a few times but the teacher kept right on. She was suddenly overtaken with the fear of being in a strange, unnatural place, and decided it was best to follow him closely.

Ahead was a funny arrangement of boards, some lying flat and some on edge. What were they for? She knew about ladders, but what was this that the teacher was walking right into? He put his foot on the first rise and began to go up. How strange and

wonderful! Again she wanted to stop and look, since they were the first stairs she had ever seen.

The sudden tropical darkness was falling, and as they reached the top of the stairs, they met a girl coming along with a light. It was a wonderfully bright light that came from a glass bottle and there was a glass around the flame. Here again was a thing for Naw Su to stop and look at. The girl also interested Naw Su. She was dressed in a *hsay* much like her own, but it was white and new. There was something queer about the girl. Her hair was different and she did not look like the girls Naw Su had known in the village.

While Naw Su was trying to accustom herself to all these new things, the teacher asked the girl with the lamp if the "Mama" was at home. To this the girl replied that she was and pointed behind her. Just then Naw Su was awed to see a very tall person with a funny long white dress gathered in at the waist coming toward them. When she came up to them, she shook hands with the teacher. She was very pale. Her eyes were not like any Naw Su had ever seen. They were light, almost white. Her hair too was queer. It was not black, but it was the color of coconut rope, and was wound round her head in big braids. She said something that Naw Su could not understand, and put out her hand toward her. That was too much for the girl; the strange house, the queer people frightened her. She wanted to scream and run as she used to do when she encountered anything strange and unknown in the jungle. But here there was no jungle in which to hide.

She decided it was wisest to stay close to the teacher. He did not seem afraid of the Mama. Was she really one of those "white foreigners who ate babies"? In her fear she hid behind the teacher, clutched at his *hsay*, and began to sob.

The teacher tried to move aside and have her greet the missionary lady, but the more he stepped away, the more agile was Naw Su, in her effort to keep behind him.

"This girl ran away from home to come to school and now that she is here, she is so afraid that she does not know what to do," he laughed. "But she really wants to study and I think she will soon get over her fear." Then turning to the girl, he said, "Don't be afraid. I know all is new and strange, but you will see that Mama will love you. Come, shake hands with her and let her teach you."

Naw Su shuddered. She wished she had never wanted to be taught. She clung all the closer to the teacher and furtively looked about for a place to run, but there was no refuge. The teacher took hold of her shoulder and, giving her a shake, said to her, "You little squirrel, do not act like a crazy person. You wanted to come to school, did you not? Why are you afraid now? Mama Maynard is your teacher. She will help you. There's nothing to fear. You can learn here. Don't be afraid. Come out and let me talk with you. Come! Come quickly!"

Naw Su began to realize that she was attracting attention, for a group of girls had heard that a new girl had just come and they had run to see her and

were staring at her from the other end of the long room.

"Put out your hand and shake hands," the teacher ordered. "That is the Christian way of saying 'How do you do?' Your right hand! Take the Mama's hand and greet her nicely."

Limply Naw Su stuck out her left hand, and the Mama, not wishing to embarrass her further, took hold of it and said, "We are glad you wanted to come to school. You will soon feel at home here. We have a number of girls who came a little while ago and were just as afraid as you are, but now they are very happy and are learning a great many new things."

Naw Su wanted to laugh now, for while the Mama spoke to her in the Karen language, it was funny. Her words had a queer sound, not only because she was speaking a down country dialect, but because she pronounced her words with a foreign accent. Naw Su giggled a little and it gave vent to her emotions sufficiently to enable her to lisp a whisper of assent to what the Mama had said. Miss Maynard was wise enough not to frighten the child. She called one of the girls from the group that was watching at the end of the hall and told her to take Naw Su and show her where she was to sleep. This the girl did, appearing proud of the fact that she had been singled out to introduce the new girl to her strange surroundings.

Naw Su followed blindly. There had been so many new sights already that she drew into her shell

and accepted without outward show of emotion each new development. Inwardly she was so full of fears that she could hardly walk straight. Furtively she glanced about to see if there was any loop-hole through which she could escape to the security of her own jungle. But the girl who was directing her kept close by her. Besides she was up high above the ground and there was no chance to jump out of the window, and the doors only opened into the next room. Her guide led her into a long room where mats were laid down on either side. The girls by now were coming back from their observation point in the hallway and were squatting on their mats, their eyes on the newcomer.

"Did you bring a mat on which to sleep?" asked the older girl, well knowing that Naw Su had none, but just to make conversation.

Naw Su said nothing and the girl went to a rack and, unrolling a mat that was standing there, said, "There is no one using this mat. You take it and put it over there in the corner and put your blanket on it and you can sleep there." Naw Su did as she was told, and sat down on the mat, wondering what was to happen next. At the same time she kept shifting her eyes here and there to see if there was any possible way to escape the strange surroundings.

"Did you eat rice before you came up to the school?" asked the guide.

Even this question at first brought no response, but then Naw Su admitted that she had not had any food since early in the afternoon. So her guide left her and went and told Miss Maynard that the new

girl was hungry and had had no rice. The Mama ordered her own cook to take a plate of rice from her evening meal and to add a piece of dried fish and a few chilis and give it to the new girl. The food made Naw Su forget some of her fears. When she had finished, she felt a little more at home. As she was very tired from her long walk, she rolled up in her thin cotton blanket and was soon lost to the world in sleep.

The next morning she awoke as usual with the light of dawn. Only a few of the other girls were awake. The feeling of strangeness returned to her and she was bewildered. She did not want to open her eyes. She wished she had never wanted to read books and to come such a long, long way away from her home village. She opened her eyes and looked about her, hoping that there might be a place where she could slink away where no one could see her—just as she so often did in the jungle near the village. But suddenly it flashed over her that she had been unhappy in the village with all its taboos and fears. She had come to school to learn to read books and find out about things that had troubled her. She should not be afraid, even if the Mama did have blue eyes and light hair like a *muxha*, and even if she was surrounded by strange girls and big fearsome houses! She would stay and learn the new ways that went with the study of books.

She was stirred from her thoughts by the older girl who had showed her into the room the evening before. The girl called her by name and told her to

get up and get her extra *hsay* and follow her. What did this mean? Here was another new adventure. By this time she had made up her mind that if she was to learn new things the only way was to follow directions.

The girl led her along a little path to a corner of the compound where a sort of room had been made by hanging some squares of bamboo matting. Inside were several big jars filled with water. Two or three girls were there, pouring water over themselves or pounding the boards on the ground with their clothes. "Pull off your *hsay*," the girl ordered. "It is the color of the ground. It is dirty. You must bathe. Everybody has to be clean here in school. Now take this soap, this white cake that has come from America, and rub yourself all over till it bubbles out all white. Then take water out of this jar with this coconut shell. Don't use too much or you will have to draw a lot yourself. Make yourself clean. That is the rule that Mama is very harsh about. She says, 'Good girls will keep themselves clean.' "

As Naw Su began to rub the soapy water over her and felt the strange softness of the suds, she asked the girl: "Will this make me white like Mama?"

"We don't know. We have only been here a little while. Perhaps if we use it for a long time it will make us white. But now you get clean and don't bother to ask so many questions. Rub your hair with the soap too. You will need to comb it. Of course you have lice in it. Let me see if you have a lot of

them. The way Mama does to get rid of them is to have your head shaved. That stops them, unless you get them again—and if you do, Mama will scold you hard. Yes, you have lice. All new girls have them, but you wash your hair now and we will see about that later. Come along, it is nearly time for rice. Put on that other *hsay* and come along.”

But just then Naw Su gave a startled scream and began rubbing her eyes. “That soap has put out my eyes! I can’t see! My eyes hurt. A *nat* has bitten me. I can’t see! I’m blind! I will die! Help me! Help me!”

The older girl only laughed at Naw Su. She too had once been hurt and scared by the foreign soap, and she was not unwilling to let Naw Su get a good introduction to her new surroundings. Gradually the clean water, which she dashed over the screaming girl, washed out the soap and Naw Su began to open her eyes, a bit relieved, and angry. She was suspicious that she was being made a victim of the older girl’s joke and she hit out at her with her foot.

It was soon time for the morning rice, and as Naw Su went to the crude eating shed under the boys’ dormitory, she felt very self-conscious. She had never seen so many boys and girls eating together at once. The boys squatted at long, low board benches on one side of the place. The few girls huddled together at the outer “table.” The latter were very subdued at being in the presence of boys, who stole sly glances in their direction and could be seen whispering to each other. Evidently all had noticed the presence of a new girl in the school.

Later Naw Su experienced her first day in school. All the pupils gathered in the chapel. The missionary gave out a number and the older pupils looked up something in their books and then they all began to sing together. She had never heard anything like it in her life. At first she wanted to run—the common Karen reaction to anything new and startling—but she held herself together, and after the first few lines, began to be pleased. The music seemed to charm her. It thrilled her, and she felt twinges up and down her back. Was this the country of the *muhxas*? Had those fairies come down and taught the children to sing? As she saw that they were all children like herself, she wished that she could sing with them. While the teacher was reading from a big book, she sat entranced. Here was what she had come to school for, to learn to read. She did not catch a word of the meaning but the fact of seeing the book read helped her to forget all of the horrid things like soap and daily baths and strange faces and new kinds of houses and all the other queer things she had seen in the last few hours. She was determined to master that book and all the books in the world.

Presently the leader of the gathering asked them all to bow their heads and follow his words. He prayed that they might all learn. Naw Su thought: that is what I want; may the strange, unseen God help me. From that moment on each new experience came more naturally. Her joy was unbounded when the Mama called her and gave her two or three books. She hugged them to her heart and

would not put them down on the desk to which she had been assigned. Now she had some books. What should she do? What should she say? She had never heard the words "thank you," so she just hugged the books and said nothing.

CHAPTER X

THAT morning the session of school seemed to be endless. Naw Su realized that she must sit still. She did not dare to talk, although some of the other girls did whisper and giggle. She still felt like a fawn lured into some enclosure, finding itself shut in and longing for the freedom of the forest, and yet so bewildered that it did not know which way to run. She had come to the school of her own accord, but she had not dreamed there would be such a difference between the life she had lived and the one that she wanted. Nor could she foresee the years of struggle that would be required to enable her to enjoy the full realization of her dreams.

When the bell, which was but a piece of railway iron hanging under a tree, was beaten by an iron rod, producing a noise like a Burmese gong, the teacher told the children that it was the noon recess and that they could go out and rest for an hour. How much time an hour was Naw Su did not know. The other children were piling their books on their desks and going out of the room. Naw Su followed, but she could not bear to leave her precious books. She took them with her. She trailed the others as they went to their dormitory. There she

slumped down on the floor where the mat that she slept on the night before had been. It was now rolled up and put in the rack along the side of the room. She opened her books and looked at the pages. She could not make anything out of the little round black marks that covered the pages. There were a few pictures in one of them, a First Reader, but they showed strange children playing in unknown ways. It seemed so easy for the teachers to look at the books and tell what they said, but they did not say anything to her. The teacher had not had time that morning to give Naw Su the individual attention that she needed in order to help her to catch up with the class that had been in school several weeks.

Looking up from her new books, she felt discouraged, and glancing out of the window she saw the mountains in the distance. The picture of her home village came before her: the stream where they had caught the fish, the spring where they got the water, and the betel gardens. Immediately she was overcome with a desire to be back running free along the path by the river. She wanted to be home—but again came the thought of all the taboos she would have to remember: the trouble when the old man died, the “disgrace” which her parents had told her that she had brought on the family. She turned back to the books. “Even if they are hard I will keep on till I can read them. No, I will not run away. I will stay here even if it kills me.”

That afternoon the teacher called one of the older girls and told her to take Naw Su to the girls’

house and help her to read the letters. There the girl opened the Karen spelling book and, pointing to the first round mark, said, " 'Ka': You say after me, 'ka.' That's it. Now say it again, 'ka.' Now the next; that is 'Hka.' It is only half as big as the other. Say it, 'Hka.' " And so on through the list of twenty-five letters, then their accents. By that time Naw Su was so dazed she could not say any more and the girl gave her up as too new and dull to learn.

"You will have to work hard if you are going to read."

The task was strange, but Naw Su realized that it was what the other girls had done, and so she forced herself to say over and over the names of the letters which were in the spelling book, calling out each one as well as she could remember it. With alternate fits of homesickness and determination to learn to read, she went through the first week, and then as she became accustomed to her new surroundings and work, she made better progress. The teachers found her not only bright and interesting but she showed more originality than the other pupils.

As all the girls had duties to perform, Miss Maynard assigned Naw Su the task of sweeping and dusting her room each morning. Miss Maynard reasoned this would give her a chance to know the girl better and to help her to lose her fear of her. She liked the wild little creature. Naw Su soon learned that she could ask Miss Maynard questions and get a kindly answer. The Karen teachers in the

classes were often impatient with her for putting inquiries that they could not readily answer, but the white woman was different. No longer did she think that Miss Maynard was a *muxha* and that her eyes were queer. She saw in them a light of love that she had never seen in any eyes before, and she responded. She longed to be with the Mama all the time and was constantly asking if she could not help her in some way. Thus she made better progress in her class and soon caught up with the others.

Other children were coming to school. The astonishing news was going through the hills that girls could be taught to read. The fact that the Christians had broken with the old taboos and were being taught that the Gospel set them free from the fear of the *nats* led the people to want to learn to read and to let their girls study books. Each break with the hide-bound customs of their ancestors pointed to greater freedom, not only spiritually but mentally.

By the following year Naw Su had well established herself in the routine of school life. She was doing well with her books and saw that by helping the Mama she was making the road easier for herself. There were many things a missionary had to do. Miss Maynard was pioneering in the mission field and she was grateful for every bit of help she could get from the people and especially from the students. Part of her work was to help them to a sense of responsibility, an idea utterly foreign to the Karen of Burma. Therefore it was easy for

Naw Su to get very close to the Mama, and she was called on to help her in many ways.

One of the ways was to take care of new girls who came to the school. One such was little Naw Blu Tha, who joined the school about a year after Naw Su had arrived.

This little girl, whom they said was eight years old but who looked only five, was even dirtier than Naw Su had been when she arrived. Her *hsay* was about to drop off of her. It was caked with mud and had many broken and torn places in it. Miss Maynard told Naw Su to get another garment from the box in which she kept a supply for just such emergencies as this, and to take the girl to the bath house and start her on the way to cleanliness. Naw Blu Tha was named for the round mud pellets, about the size of marbles, which the natives used for shooting in a particular kind of bow to kill birds and rats. Naw Blu Tha was herself round and plump.

Under Naw Su's instructions the little girl went through all the experiences that had made a lasting impression on Naw Su a year before—even to the getting soap, which she too called a *nat*, into her eyes. But what was more serious was that Naw Blu Tha's hair was so matted that the mission people could not get at it to clear out the lice. So she had to have an Indian barber called to shave her head. At first the little girl, who had never seen an Indian at such close range before, was so frightened that she hid her head and refused to allow the man to get his knife anywhere near her. Naw Su begged

her, then scolded, and finally threatened the poor child with being sent home without learning to read the book. Finally, in desperation, Naw Su took the scissors from the fearsome Indian and cropped off the locks of the little girl, leaving the head all covered with uneven lines, like a field that had been plowed by buffaloes that would not follow the furrows. When she had finished, she tried to send the Indian away. He demanded pay for the work he had not done. He stubbornly refused to leave the place and was abusing the girls, thinking that he could easily frighten them. Miss Maynard heard the high voices as they argued with each other. She gave the man a small copper coin, which he took, saying that he had wasted a lot of time on mere girls and that they were not worth as much as a good heifer.

The sight of Naw Blu Tha's mottled head helped the Mama to laugh off the unpleasantness of her encounter with the barber.

As Naw Su brought her protégée back to the dormitory, the girls were having their free time, since classes had just been dismissed. The girls were sitting in small groups. A few were playing games with *maw-ke-tha*, large seeds like those of the horse-chestnut, using them much as boys use similar seeds in the West. Others were leaving for the bath house. Several of them were sitting by the window with their newly acquired hymn-books, and were singing hymn after hymn together. This fascinated Naw Blu Tha, as it had Naw Su when she first came to the school for there is hardly a Karen who

is not thrilled by music. The contrast between the old native airs, with their plaintive, five-note minor scale and their droning, monotonous, mournful tunes, with the bright and colorful songs such as have cheered the Christian churches down through the ages at once caught the imagination of the Karens. Not only had the younger white brothers from the West brought the Bible, which they accepted as the Book of Life, but they had also brought the songs of Zion.

Both Naw Su and Naw Blu Tha sat down with the girls, and the new girl was so enchanted by the music that she soon lifted up her dejected face and it was as radiant as a full moon. Nothing but the music mattered. The girls turned page after page and sang each song with sweet, velvety voices that would do credit to any school in the cultivated West. When they came to a song that was not very well known, the older girls would lead it off, following the tune as best they could. Naw Blu Tha soon showed that she could learn tunes as quickly as the girls who could read. Naw Su saw that she was going to be a very jolly companion, quick to learn, and was happy in the thought that she would have the fun of introducing her to many new ways. For the first time Naw Su was experiencing the joy of doing for others. Slowly the new Christian ways of brotherly love were rounding out her character.

CHAPTER XI

N^{AW} BLU THA asked as she and Naw Su were sweeping out a class room, which was the part of the morning work that had been assigned to them, "Are you going to be baptized?"

"I do not know," was the noncommittal reply.

"I thought you wanted to do everything that the Mama wants you to do, and I thought you were ready to be baptized. Can't you answer all of the questions the pastors are asking when the children come up for examination?"

"I can't say. I guess I could answer them, but I do not want to go up for examination yet."

"Then you must believe in the *nats* and devils that they say are all around us."

"No, I don't," said Naw Su. I have never seen one. I hate to hear about them. I do not believe there are such things."

"But," persisted the little girl, undecidedly, "all of the people say there are devils all about us, and our folks used to kill a lot of pigs and chickens to get rid of them or to keep on the good side of them. I guess they would not have done that if there had not been something to be afraid of." Naw Blu Tha gathered their sweepings and threw them out of a window to let the winds dispose of them.

"Well," said Naw Su, stubbornly, "I never did believe there were such things, and sometimes I wonder if there really is a God. You have never seen him, have you?"

Naw Blu Tha was lost in reflection as she stared from the window. "No-o, I have never seen him, but he has given us the book that tells about him, and I like to think that we have such a fine, strong person to depend on when we get in trouble.

Naw Su threw more dirt out of the window with a quick gesture of irritation. "There, get away dirt! I don't want to see you any more. I do not like you and I hate *nats*. I do not know whether there is a God or not. Anyway I want to know more. I am not going to be baptized. I want to read books, and I am going to read all of the books in the world. I am going to find out about everything, *nats* or no *nats*." She shook her head and swished her coconut broom against a large mat that formed the wall of the dormitory.

Naw Blu Tha followed, wondering what had gotten into the girl who had taken such good care of her since she had come to the school. She had supposed she believed in the great God that they read and sang about. Now she was all confused.

That evening the pastor of the community church asked all of the children who wanted to be baptized to come to his house near the school that he might question them and learn how much they knew about the step they were being urged to take. When the notice came to the girls, there was much whispering and talking, and several of the older

ones said they were ready to join the church, and several of the little girls wanted to go along with them; but Miss Maynard advised them to wait until they had more instruction. She also said that those whose parents were not Christians should wait until they got their consent.

Evidently she intended to make an exception of Naw Su, for when Naw Su did not offer herself for baptism, the teacher asked her if she would like to join those who were going to the pastor's house for further instruction. Naw Su quickly replied that she did not.

"But you are one of my best girls," pleaded Miss Maynard, "and you always do all that I ask of you. You are good in school. You help the little girls. I think you show that you have a Christian heart. I know you could not get your parents' permission, since you had to run away to come to school. We consider that you are under our care, and we are willing to give the school's consent for you to be baptized."

Naw Su wanted to please Miss Maynard, as did all of the other girls. She was fond of calling her Mama—a term of respect used by the Burmans for any woman whom they admire. Miss Maynard was an up-state New Yorker who had been in Burma a few years. She was a jolly young woman with reddish brown hair. Her bright blue eyes fascinated Naw Su, who had never seen anyone with anything but the black eyes of the Mongoloids. Miss Maynard had learned the Karen language and spoke it with only a slight foreign accent.

The girls loved her and she found an outlet for her affections by giving herself whole-heartedly to the girls who were growing and learning under her care.

"I don't want to go," was all that Naw Su, with characteristic Karen reticence, would answer in reply to her question.

"You believe in God, do you not? You know that Jesus died for you. You love to read the New Testament. You believe it is true."

"I like all books and I am going to read every one of them, but I have never seen God, and I don't want to be baptized." Miss Maynard saw that the conversation was only stiffening the girl's resistance. She said as she turned and left her, "Well, think it over. You will feel differently bye and bye."

The other girls went to the pastor's house. Then the pastor, the teachers and the missionary, Mr. Simms, gave the matter careful consideration. They decided that nine of the fifteen candidates really believed in God and were ready to follow the Savior and might therefore be baptized and join the church. While the children's ideas were still somewhat vague, it was decided that they were determined to try to do right. They would still of course be under careful instruction and guidance. Three were not accepted because their parents were known to be fully in the clutches of old superstitions. Miss Maynard wondered if Naw Su had not been wise, after all.

The next Sunday, after the early morning prayer service at the church, the candidates for baptism

were each called before the congregation to tell what they had told the teachers and to answer any question that the democratic church wished to ask to satisfy itself that those who were coming into membership were worthy of the privilege. All the children were accepted.

There were also six men and women who had come down from the hills. They wanted to join the church, for they said their old worship of the *nats*, of whom they were afraid, had never satisfied them. Now they had learned that they might worship a God that they loved because he had given them everything, thus showing his love for them. They had always been looking for the white brother to come and bring them the book that would make them free, and now that he had come, they were ready to do anything he said. He had told them they must believe in God and in Jesus Christ, God's son, and then they could be baptized. They wanted to say they did believe, even though they did not yet fully understand.

They said they were ready to give up feasting the *nats*. They did not fear them any longer since the white brother had come. They would stop making and drinking the rice liquor; they would not go to the feasts of their relatives, and they would rest one day in seven. They seemed so anxious to be given a trial that all felt they really were in earnest. So they were received for baptism.

The service in the chapel was dismissed so that all of the congregation could go down to the river where there were pools of water fed by little

streams that trickled through the sand. There a hymn was sung. The missionary (there was no ordained pastor among the Karens at that time) walked out into the water, and as each of the candidates came to him, he repeated the old formula: "In the name of the father, the son, and the holy spirit I baptize you." He named each candidate and gently lowered him into the water while the earnest little group on the bank sang a verse from the old hymn, *Oh Happy Day*.

If some of the children giggled, it was not in derision, or because the wet clothes clung as they came out of the water, but because they were excited. The missionary had told them how Jesus had gone down into the water of the River Jordan to be baptized, and that now they were blessed because they were following his example. They returned to their homes in deepest reverence. There was less chatter among the children, and the older people seemed to be deeply moved. The men and women who had come down from the hills looked as though they had caught the vision of some power outside of and above and beyond themselves. Their faces glowed with a new expression of faith and love and hope.

The new members were welcomed by the missionary at the noon service and they were given their first communion. It was a solemn occasion, but through it all there was a great note of joy and victory over evil. The missionary preached the sermon and told them it was a great day because the

people were coming out of the bondage of fear into a new freedom of body, mind and soul. He urged that more children be sent to school that they might learn to read and find the new life in the church and help to emancipate the rest of their people.

All through the day Naw Su moved in a daze. She could not tell what was the matter. She wanted to be up there with the others who had been recognized by the baptism and by taking the communion, but she held back and felt there was something that was pulling her in both directions. She had been told to give her heart to Jesus, but she felt there was something that she could not yield. She wanted all of the good things that had come to her in the school. She wanted the books, all of them. She wanted to learn everything that was being taught, to hear everything that the missionary and the teachers said, to be clean, to be well fed, to help with the little girls, but what was the matter?

She was very unhappy. She did not know what to do. She wanted to conform. She wanted the teachers to call on her and to trust her. Indeed, she wanted the Mama to give her duties that would place her above the rest. She wanted to stand in front of the others, especially those who were younger than herself, but still something held her back.

For Naw Su the school routine went on as usual. There were the daily lessons, the morning tasks, helpful little things to do for the younger children,

an occasional walk to the market-place in the afternoon, bathing, the dining room, where she not only enjoyed the meals but the happy chatter of the other girls. As the days swept on, she regained her smile, but she began to realize that she had lost something during the period of doubt and uncertainty. Naw Paw Tu, a tall girl for her age, was rapidly becoming her rival. She had been among those who had been baptized—after which she had suddenly seemed to blossom out. Once Naw Paw Tu had been indifferent to Miss Maynard, but now she was her most eager attendant. She had begun to usurp Naw Su's place. Naw Su did not think that Naw Paw Tu was deliberately trying to shove her out but the girl was unconsciously doing it by being more kind and thoughtful.

The more Naw Su pondered the matter, the more her spirits drooped. She wanted to be the one that the teachers called on. She wanted to be the big help to others. Now Naw Paw Tu was doing the things that she wanted to do. She decided that she would go to the Mama and offer her services; maybe in that way she could win back her place of importance. She would do all the favors she could for Miss Maynard.

When Naw Su appeared, the missionary smiled. "I am glad to see you come again as you used to do, Naw Su. I was a bit worried about you when you decided not to be baptized. I was afraid that you were turning from the way that is best for you. I have missed you. I am glad you decided to come back, but I have already told Naw Paw Tu that

she may take this package of books to Mr. Simms. I must keep my promise."

"I hate Naw Paw Tu," cried Naw Su. "Why do you ask her to do all of the things that I used to do?" Tears began to well up in her shiny eyes and she turned and ran back to the dormitory and threw herself on her mat.

Miss Maynard was much disturbed by the outburst. It was the first that she had seen in Naw Su. The storm in the heart of the little girl had not broken out during the months that she had been in school, but now its pent-up fury could no longer be restrained. Miss Maynard remembered the circumstances of Naw Su's birth, the storm, and the Karen belief in evil omens. She was worried.

For the next few days Miss Maynard's attention was taken up by her many duties, but that did not prevent her from thinking much about the girl and wondering what could be done for her. She observed that Naw Su went dully through her classes, where once she had been all interest and enthusiasm. The girl seemed to be so out of sorts with herself and others that she had become almost ostracized by her companions.

Late one afternoon she felt that she must take up Naw Su's problem. She went to the dormitory, and as she had expected, found her there sulking on her mat.

"Is my little girl sick?"

"No."

"Then you should be out skipping the rope with the other girls."

"I hate jumping the rope."

"You have always been first in the game. What is the matter?"

"I don't want to skip rope with Naw Paw Tu."

"Naw Paw Tu is all right. She does not hate you. What has she done to make you hate her?"

"I don't know."

They had a long talk. Naw Su's share of the conversation consisted mostly of, "I don't know," as the patient teacher asked question after question until it became quite clear that the girl was jealous because she thought she had been crowded out by Naw Paw Tu. Miss Maynard realized that Naw Su was keen for her place of leadership with the girls and could not understand why she had lost it. Just the evening before Naw Su admitted that one of the girls, who had seemed to like her most, had taunted: "Your name means Miss Storm. Naw Paw Tu's means Golden Flower. She is all smiles now, and you are all frowns."

Miss Maynard remembered that the change in the girls and in their leadership had come about the time of the baptism. Because Naw Su had kept away from her since then, and because Naw Paw Tu had seemed to want to be near her, it had been but natural to ask the latter to do her errands.

It was getting dark and before Miss Maynard left the girls were beginning to come into the dormitory to get their books for evening study. Much had been made clear, and Naw Su, although still in something of a mental fog, had been led to see that when one refuses to do what is right in one

thing it often leads to other mistakes. She was asked if she thought her loss of happiness and of leadership had anything to do with her refusal to let God guide her life. Did she think she should have been baptized and that she should have shown God that she was one who was going to do her best to follow him by coming into his church with the believers? Perhaps she felt she had lost step with the others and that had kept her from being on hand to run errands. Of course she could not expect to lead others unless she set the right step for them.

CHAPTER XII

MANY times during the next month, while Naw Su was trying to find herself, Miss Maynard came to her in the dormitory and called her to her room where they talked things over and often knelt down to ask God that the young girl might recover her happiness and her joy in service to others. The teacher felt that it all hinged on her willingness to be a Christian. If Naw Su could not accept Christ, she felt that much of the work in the school might prove to be a detriment to her. Her home surroundings would be less agreeable, and her sharpened wits would make her more critical of the old way of life. She stressed her view in the talks with the girl.

The purpose of the missionary was clear and definite. She knew that unless Naw Su accepted Christ and began a Christ-directed life that she would fail as far as peace of mind and spiritual growth were concerned. The dominant purpose in the mind of the girl however was to be the leader of the girls. She wanted to be the school favorite. It was the love of power that caused her to make every possible move for self-glorification. She was not troubled because there was a barrier between herself and God, but because she was losing instead

of gaining prestige. She wanted to remain in school that she might make a beginning toward reading all of the books in the world and satisfy her lust for knowledge. She knew in a vague way that knowledge was associated with power. It was clear that she could not see how loving Jesus fitted in with her program. There must be some connection, since Christians did seem to be happier, but she could not see why and she was not one to act until things were clear.

"If you will yield yourself to Jesus, he will take away the old heart of sin and give you a heart of love that will make you want to do good to others," said Miss Maynard. "He will make you strong so that you can go home and free your own people from the worship of the *nats*. You will want to do right that you may help others. He will make you a teacher in a school where you can help many children to know him. You cannot do these things until you first come to him yourself. It is so much wiser to do that while you are young, while you have not gone so far on the wrong road that you cannot easily turn back."

As Naw Su sat quite motionless and made no reply, Miss Maynard was encouraged to continue. She had no idea how much was concealed behind that poker face. "If you will give your mind and heart to Christ and begin at once to pattern your life by his, while you are forming the habit of waiting for his direct guidance, he will help you to be a fine girl, for you have a good mind. He will give you wisdom from day to day, and you will be

much more happy than those who do not accept him. You will feel as you did when you first came to school and told us you had to come because God called you. It was God that created the desire in you to learn and to be somebody in this world. Now are you so full of self that you no longer feel the need of him?"

Naw Su suddenly brightened. A new idea was beginning to form in her mind. It was not as the teacher supposed, not the idea she had been trying to put over to her.

"If I get baptized," she thought, "I will become a great person. I will be happy again. The other girls will do as I tell them. I can do all of the important things for the Mama and for Mr. Simms and I will have an even bigger place than I used to have. I can be the leader while I am in this school studying. I can stay right here and teach and I shall have the top place over the rest." Such were the thoughts that were racing through her mind like the driven rain that raced down the mountain on the day of her birth. Yet she was not quite sure of herself. She must get more light. If she was right in thinking that baptism was the first necessary step, she wanted to do it right away. She was not going to get caught, however. She must first be certain that this was the way of the greatest advantage for herself.

"If I am baptized, will God then give me everything I want?" she asked the patient teacher.

"I cannot promise you that, but we do know that he has told us that if we seek him with the whole

heart, he will add to us everything that is needed in his service. That will mean great happiness and a useful place to fill for him."

"And if I do this to please you, will it mean that I can have the good times that I used to have in school?" She wanted to ask if she would be put over the girls again, but she thought it best to conceal her real purpose. She could not have analyzed herself and told that she was seeking personal power. She was conscious of a sudden new found joy without realizing that it came from the most subtle temptation to which the human race is subject—a lust for power. She wanted to find power. Her teacher wanted her to find God, the source of all power, and a love for his guided service which is the fullest possible expression of the soul.

Naw Su was conscious of a desire to climb to loftier heights, and here was her toe-hold. She fell into the language of the missionary: "If I give my heart to Jesus and follow him, will he give me the big things to do here in school? Will you ask me to run all of the errands for you?"

"Yes, of course I will. You have always been a great help to me and to the Karen teachers." In her earnest desire to help Naw Su she failed to recognize her motives, although she knew there were things about the Oriental mind that a Westerner could never understand.

To Naw Su it meant restored favor, a more exalted position in the school—a chance to teach there some day, and always to wear fine clothes.

She suddenly decided, I will be baptized, join the church, and get in on the inside of things.

She turned her large luminous eyes upon the teacher for a moment, then dropped her long black lashes and seemed to be interested in something on the floor. She said with a low, calm voice that gave no hint of the tumult that was surging within her heart, "I want to be baptized. I want to have it done very soon. Can it be next Sunday?"

Miss Maynard was over-joyed at the supposed victory that she had won. With a new light in her clear blue eyes, she said, "I will speak to Mr. Simms and the pastor, and, perhaps, they will arrange for another baptism very soon—but you know it is the willingness to fully surrender that really counts. That is what Jesus sees, and that is what gives you a new heart. The form will follow. There is no great hurry about that. I am very happy. Come into my room and we will kneel down together and thank God for what he is doing for you. You must very earnestly ask him to guide the life that you are surrendering."

At Miss Maynard's eager insistence, Mr. Simms arranged for himself and the pastor to have a talk with the girl. Naw Su was a little frightened to be called all alone, but she appreciated the distinction. She sat on a mat that Mrs. Simms spread upon the floor for her. Mr. Simms sat on a chair but the Karen teacher sat on a mat beside her.

She was asked about her desire to be baptized, and she said she felt she must have it done as soon as possible. Then she was asked about her home,

and whether her parents would give permission. She replied that she had run away from home to follow the Christian teacher, that she might learn to read books and find out about the true God. It was too far to go back, and, anyway, she wanted to be baptized whether her people liked it or not. She did not like their old *nats* or want to follow their superstitious and their frightened way of life. She insisted on this so strongly that the two men promised to think the matter over. They might go ahead without the parents' consent, but that was not usual.

She promised that she would have nothing to do with the family *bgħa* feasts and that if her family called her, she would not go. After due consideration, Mr. Simms told her they had decided to allow her to be baptized. The ceremony took place the following week. Several more Karens came from the hills, and they asked to have the ceremony take place on Sunday that they might return to their betel gardens.

The baptism and the communion that immediately followed afforded the Mama and Naw Su great joy. Early Monday morning Naw Su was at the teacher's door, asking to be sent on errands, for she had taken her place as the self-appointed messenger of the school. She was beginning to feel that she was a very important part of the institution. She was careful not to laud it over the other girls enough to make herself too unpopular, but she did make the most of every opportunity to exert her influence, to give advice to the others, and to take the

younger ones in hand. The teacher thought this was good evidence of the girl's change of heart. It pleased her, and it relieved her of many small details that are so tiring when one is in a strange land and dealing with a strange people.

Things went on in this way for several weeks. Miss Maynard had dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Simms and the chief topic of discussion was the change that had come to their brightest pupil. They rejoiced together that another convert had been won from the darkness of heathenism. It encouraged them and made them very grateful and happy.

CHAPTER XIII

THE week for the final examinations for the year was due. Everyone was nervous and tense. The children were made aware that with the new system that was just being inaugurated the newly appointed government inspectors would be present and that promotions would depend on the result of the examinations. Naw Su was due to pass up. Although the teachers had no fear that she might fail, she caught the general tenseness of the situation and her nerves were on edge. With her it was a matter of holding her position as a leader and having a top grade position in the school. She was proud of her standing and wanted nothing to mar her record.

The pupils tried to study. They even attempted to memorize their books word by word. They recited arithmetic tables forwards and backwards. It was a strenuous time and they were doing the best they could.

One evening, just as the girls were returning from the study, a Karen walked into their house all hot and travel stained and said he wanted Naw Su. She jumped up from her mat, and as she approached him, he blurted out, "Your mother is dying. You must come home and complete the fam-

ily circle as they eat to the *bgha*. If you do not, she will die. They sent me for you. You must come back with me. Your father orders it."

This was a thunderbolt indeed. She recognized a younger brother of her mother's. She had always liked him very much. In fact, he was the only member of the family that had been able to get along with her. Probably that was why he had been sent.

"The school rules are that you must get such permission of the missionary," interjected the young Karen teacher who was in charge of the dormitory. "Go to that big house over there and see teacher Simms. If he and Mama Maynard agree, then she may go. But you know it will be hard for her. If the mother is so ill, she may die before she could get there, and this is a Christian school. We do not believe in the old heathen customs. I am certain Mr. Simms would not be willing to have her take part in such a feast. You may ask him, but she cannot leave without his consent."

The teacher stood close to the Karen that she might be the better able to talk with him. She kept urging him to go to the missionary's house. She tried to explain that no men were allowed in the girls' house. All that she said seemed but to increase his pitiful bewilderment. He had never been in a school before, and he had only been to the big city twice. Everything seemed very strange.

Some of the girls ran to Mama and told her that Naw Su's uncle had come to take her home the next morning, that her mother was ill and would die un-

less she went to join the family feast. Miss Maynard was deeply distressed. She did not want her brightest girl taken away just at examination time. She doubted if Naw Su would be given another test, so rigid was the new system at the school—and that would mean a whole year wasted. Anyway, she could not allow her to go on such an heathenish mission. She remembered how Naw Su had asserted that she had broken with the family because of its customs when she had run away and come to school. She had been baptized and had joined the church.

Miss Maynard went out into the dormitory to see the man. He was a sorry looking creature. He was thin and haggard, rough and dirty. She could not fancy Naw Su, now so neat and clean, going on a long journey with this unclean individual.

She tried to talk to the man, but he was dull and said he did not understand. Probably he did not, for she had not had much practice talking with the wild people from the mountain district. They had a dialect of their own. With the aid of the young teacher she finally got him started over to the missionary's house. Then she turned to Naw Su, who was doubled up on her mat crying. She pitied the girl, for it must be hard, she thought, to have the members of one's family sick and not be able to get to them. She thought of her own mother away off in America and hoped that nothing would happen to her while she was away.

She knelt down beside the girl and tried to comfort her, but the more she said, the louder the girl

cried. When she tried to give her a reassuring pat, Naw Su squirmed away and hid her face beneath her blanket.

"Do not cry," the teacher said in a soft, soothing voice. "Your mother may be well by this time. You could not get to her in time if she was very ill. Think of the long, long way over all of those high mountains. We will talk to the man and try to find out what is the matter with her, then we will send her some medicine. You go to sleep now and do not worry any more. We will put your mother in God's care, and it will all come right."

"I want to see my mother. I don't want her to die. I will go with my uncle. I am going at dawn!" The words were half strangled by sobs. "I am going at dawn!" Now the words came out with a clear note of determination.

Miss Maynard was taken by surprise by the willful outburst. She replied without thinking, "But you cannot go. It is too far and you will miss your examinations. They will be over in a week, and then you may go."

As Naw Su realized that she was being hindered from going to her mother at once, a strange revulsion of feeling surged through her. Her entire body shook from the wave of love and longing. She thought she had broken away from her people but the old Karen trait of family solidarity still held her fast. She suddenly began to kick her heels against the bamboo floor and shouted, "I don't want my mother to die! I am going to see her, and I am going to help save her! No one shall stop me!"

The missionary tried to reason with her. She told her she must not break the rules of the school, that the feast for the *bgha* could not make her mother well, that the illness was not caused by the demons, but by bodily conditions, and that her presence would not make any difference. The more she talked, the farther the girl withdrew into her shell until she seemed to be asleep.

Miss Maynard tip-toed out of the room. She would let the girl sleep, and the first thing in the morning she would again try to convince her that she should not go home at this time. Above all she would try to impress her with the futility of trying to raise a stricken body by feasting imaginary devils.

She passed a sleepless night, for she felt apprehensive, and was ever listening for any unusual noise in the direction of the dormitory. She heard none. As soon as it was light she arose and dressed hastily. She hurried to the dormitory and sought the stricken girl, but Naw Su's place on the mat was vacant. She questioned the other girls, but they all slept and no one knew anything about Naw Su.

The girl was already miles away on her sad journey. The storm that had blown on the night of her birth was not equal to the storm that was raging in her young heart.

CHAPTER XIV

N^{AW} SU'S homeward journey was full of mixed and jumbled feelings. When they entered the forest on the plains and she again saw the big trees, the forest flowers and plants, and the many things that she had not realized that she was missing, there was a great sense of release from the routine and the confinement of the school. To be sure, she had loved the books, and her determination to read all of them had not lessened; but the sights and sounds of the jungle gave back a thrill as of a new experience.

Just as she was beginning to enjoy the rest and freedom of the old association, she remembered the reason that had prompted the long journey, and a great eagerness to see her mother filled her mind—or as she would have said, her belly. When she was at home, there had been no great attachment between the mother and daughter. The heart of the former was too full of dire forebodings to have much room for love. It was not the custom of the Karens to show any great affection. That would have been too tempting to the *nats*. Again, they were a stolid people, long accustomed to hide in the jungle that they might avoid their more powerful Burmese neighbors.

The first day they trudged over the rolling country between the city and the foot-hills. It took them all day, and the going became monotonous. There was not enough variation to relieve the muscles that had to function at every step. Then there were long stretches with very little water and what water there was tasted of the mud of the sluggish rivers. She longed for the gush and sparkle of the clear mountain streams toward which they hastened.

There were few places to stop. The Karens did not like the plains and the Burmese did not dare to live far from the big river that was their only highway. There was no friendly village where Naw Su and her uncle could eat rice, and they were very hungry before night. The hungrier Naw Su got the more heavily the fate of her mother seemed to hang in the balance. As her fear mounted, the possibility that her mother might have died during the four days that had elapsed since her uncle had left seemed to become a certainty. Tears came to her eyes, which she stealthily brushed aside.

They reached a little collection of huts near a spring at the foot of the hills that night. They saw the buffaloes driven in—only a few of them, for the people were poor and they did not dare to make any show of having anything worth while lest they become the victims of marauding Burmese. The Burmese were irresponsible gangs that did nothing but roam the country and carry off anything they could get hold of. The only way the Karens could escape molestation was to make as little display of their villages as possible and to keep everything of

value out of sight. They built their huts on a little by-path that was shifted from time to time to keep it from being well beaten. The device was known only to other Karens who found it a convenient place to spend the night as they came from the hills.

The villagers had little to offer their guests. There was rice and a little fish that was stewed in the red juice of the acid roselle leaves. The hungry travellers put their fingers into the steaming rice and tossed great balls of it down their throats. Then they stretched themselves on the bamboo floor. The half-round side of a bamboo laid across the hut close to the wall was their pillow. They were immediately lost in the deep sleep of fatigue.

They began to stir with the first crowing of the roosters beneath the house. They had only to stretch their stiffened muscles and wash their faces. Their hostess had risen early and had a pot of rice on the fire. She knew the needs of her guests. The kernels of rice had been left hard, for they stood by one better if they were not cooked too soft. She dumped it upon the wooden family tray, gathered a few drying chilis from another tray and set it before her guests, then she bade them eat slowly, which was desert courtesy and meant that she wanted her guests to enjoy their meal.

It did not take them long to push the rice down their throats and wash it down with the water that they poured from the bamboo joints that stood against the wall. Then they took their bags and with true Karen stolidity marched down the ladder

without saying a word. They turned toward the east to climb the hills by the path that led toward the ever-increasing heights. In a few moments they were among the tall trees and the faint light of the rising sun was scarcely able to make the narrow winding path visible.

The second day's travel was more delightful. The country became more and more like the old home that Naw Su now realized she deeply loved. In the school she had been so absorbed by her ambition to read all of the books and to help with the work that she had easily put out of her mind all of the old associations of home where she had fought against the taboos, but now that she was getting back into the familiar surroundings, she was beginning to realize that she was a Karen after all, that the forest was her home and that the rude bamboo village was her first love. The ups and downs of the mountains, the big trees, the orchids, the tall bamboos, the wild creatures that flitted overhead or that scurried from her path gave her such thrills as she had not experienced since she had left them. When they ran into a herd of small monkeys that were chattering in the tree-tops, she was over-joyed and greeted them as if they were long-lost relatives.

She watched the squirrels jump from branch to branch, saw a great horn-bill fly and crawl into a hole to its nest in a hollow tree. She found many hives of wild bees sticking to the branches of the K'yin trees. Only a few of the smooth-trunked giants had pegs driven into their sides. Honey was a valuable food and it had a good market value.

Any Karen who found a honeycomb on a tree marked the tree by putting a bunch of dry grass at its stump, and then he drove pegs of hard wood up one side so that he could climb the great height to the limb on which the comb was glued.

Naw Su and her uncle had no time to look at interesting things; they must hurry on if they were to reach their village before dark. It was now late on the fourth day and by the many familiar sounds and sights Naw Su knew they were approaching home. There were the places on the mountain side where she had helped to cultivate the family rice, or big, outstanding trees under which she had played. She forgot her fatigue and pushed on with ever greater eagerness and anxiety. The nearer she came to her mother, the more she was tortured by the fear that it might be too late.

They finally climbed the last steep bank of the stream where she had so often bathed and fished. When they came within earshot of the village, they paused to listen. If her mother had already died, there would be sounds of mourning, and they would hear the beating of the drum, but since there was no unusual noise, it gave them hope that she was still breathing.

It was getting dark. There were upward flares from fireplaces. The cattle, the pigs and the chickens were all in their places for the night. They were now so near that they could hear the creaking of the bamboo floors, smell the cooking of the rice and fish. It was all so dear and familiar to Naw Su that she wondered that she had ever gone away. In

spite of the heavy brooding sorrow, she wanted to shout for joy. She wanted to announce to the entire village that she, Naw Su, was home again.

She rushed along to the familiar ladder. As she mounted it with beating heart, she saw a crowd of women huddled together in a room back of the fireplace. Every crevice of the room had been covered with blanket or mat lest any draft reach the patient. She pushed aside a blanket and there saw a bundle lying on the mat. It seemed as though every woman in the place was there. Some were holding the sick woman's hands, some were rubbing her legs under the many layers of the thin cotton blankets that were spread over her. Naw Su knew there was still life, and while there was life there was hope. She dropped down and began to cry. The women looked up and saw who it was. Two of them shifted to allow her to get into the circle, as they shouted, "That wandering pullet has come home again." But Karen-like they made no other fuss over her. They hardly stopped the rubbing, for the winds that were supposed to be raging through the one hundred twenty-six cavities of the belly would surely get the best of them if they paused in their work.

The fetid air all but stifled Naw Su, but she settled down, not knowing what else there was to do, and looked on with tearful eyes. She felt a surge of love for everything connected with her village, her home, her family. It was the dear, familiar life. Why had she ever left it?

Nothing revives old memories like the smells to

which we are accustomed in childhood. There was the smell of the unwashed blankets. The pungent odor of soot on the ceiling over the cooking place, the combined odor of the food, the animals beneath the floor, the buffaloes tethered near-by. She was suddenly borne down by the conviction that this was her life. The school with its smell of soap and cleanliness, the tidy, well-swept rooms, the books that she had all but worshipped, the white foreign teachers that smiled and encouraged one, the Karen teachers that had proven what education could do for her own people, they were all foreign. This was her native element. After a sudden flight from the safety and security of the nest, she was indeed a young pullet that had climbed back into the old basket in which she had been hatched.

There on the mat, moaning and delirious and scarcely able to recognize her, was her mother. She could not understand all that a mother meant to a child, but she could still remember how she had carried her up hill and down on her hip when she was emerging from babyhood, and how her mother would push aside her little brother, even after she was a big girl, to allow her to enjoy the warm, sweet milk from her breast. And above all she remembered how she never failed to keep the vigil with her when she was tossed by the jungle fevers. All of this belonged to her, and the old familiar sounds, sights and smells brought it all back.

There was her father sitting stolid and woebe-gone. He had scarcely lifted his head to welcome

her. He looked old. His long face was longer drawn. His high cheek-bones stuck out. His hair was unkempt, his clothes were caked with dirt, for it had been a long time since his wife had been well enough to spin and to weave him a new garment, and the old one would have to suffice until it had dropped off of him. He sat with his head on his wrists, his hands clasped over his knees that were drawn up against his breast. When his wife moaned a little louder than usual, he would lift his head, but it soon dropped back in hopeless misery.

Finally he addressed Naw Su. "Now that this wandering pullet of mine has returned, it is time that we had the family make ready for the feast of the *bgha*. If they will only let my wife get well, I will make them the biggest feast that they have ever had. I will give them the best pig and the biggest pig that she has raised. That ought to satisfy them. Now that this crazy girl has come back from her wandering, we will do all we can to bring back health to her mother."

There was not much that Naw Su could do for the sick one. There was not room for another around her. One of her aunts told her there was rice in the pot and she had better help herself. She found not only rice but a spicy little bunch of greens. These she crammed into her mouth and they brought back more memories of the days when she used to go out on the hillside to gather them. Now she was tired from the long, long trek, but as soon as she had eaten she resumed her place in the huddle around her mother. It was not long before weariness over-

came her and she toppled over and lay sleeping as she had fallen.

The next morning the preparations for the feast went on according to the usual custom. The pig was brought up into the house after all outsiders had gone home; every member of the family, in the order of their ages, touched it as a part of the ceremony and listened to the prayer that it would take away all sickness and suffering and bring back health. Then the bristles were burned off and it was cut up for cooking. Once Naw Su had always watched such proceedings with great interest, but now she was indifferent to them. She did work along with the others as they cut up the meat but it was a mere perfunctory service.

All of that day, while the preparations were going on and while the people were asking her what she had done at school and how she liked it, Naw Su was filled with conflicting emotions. She felt great delight at being home among the old familiar scenes. She loved all of them. Her Karen appreciation of home asserted itself. But there was a revulsion against the things that she had always hated. She could not bring herself to fully enter into the feast for the *nats*. Could they do anything either to cure or to save her mother? Was her sickness due to their evil attentions, or was it due to some physical reason? Was there a real God that the old *wees* had said was their creator? Was he the same one that they had tried to teach her to love and trust while she was in the mission school?

She remembered the struggle that she had gone

through when the Mama had talked with her about trusting in Jesus who would bear all of her sorrows. Was he the God that was making her mother so ill? Then she remembered the promise that she had made when she was baptized: that she was not going to believe in the *nats*, and even if people did call her, that she would not go to take part in the feasts to the *bg̃ha*. Now, here she was. She had come all of the way home because they had called her to take part in the feast to save her mother from going over to the upside-down land, and she had wanted to follow her uncle when he called her. She could not help longing to be back in the village to try to help her sick mother. Was that wrong? Had she sinned? Would God smite her for deceiving him? Who was right? Her people in the hills had done this for generation after generation and she had always been taught that whatever was old was right. The white brother had come, but he had appeared out of nowhere, and who knew how long he had been worshipping this God? The Karen was the elder brother. The Karens had always said it was not right that the younger should be an upstart and try to teach the older.

Thus tormenting questions went racing through her worried mind. She was bewildered as she sought to find the right worship and to answer to her conscience. She had early felt that the *nats* were not the all-powerful creatures that her parents had tried to teach her they were. There must be some truth in all that the school had taught her and all that the books said. She was drawn toward

the Bible, but now that she was back in the Karen village and was eating and sleeping among her own people, she felt that she was a part of all that it represented. These old ideas were at war with the new. Her belly was full of conflicts. Perhaps the winds that the medicine man talked about were to blame.

When the emotional conflict became past endurance, she left the house and went out on the hillside and sat under a banyan. The old familiar sight of the range of hills, of the betel gardens, of the white clouds against the blue sky that were fleeing before the wind only made her more sensitive to the conflict. Were they the work of the Lord of the Land, or were they the work of God? She sat there until she heard the people of the village shout that the family must gather for the feast. She knew she had been called home for this purpose, so she hardened her heart as she said:

"Now I am a Karen. I belong to my family. I must not kill my mother as they accused me of killing the old neighbor a few years ago. I will join the family. I will eat the feast to the *bg̃ha*. I will! I will!" she kept repeating to convince herself that it was the thing she really wanted to do.

The women, who were still working over Naw Su's unconscious mother, were pleased to have the feast take place. They had feared the woman would die but now that the *nats* were to be fed they felt no doubt that they would leave the sick woman for the richer feast. They predicted that the woman would soon get well.

Naw Su returned to the house, washed her face and hands and squatted down beside her sisters and the younger brother. The usual formulas were said and each member of the family took a morsel of food in turn. Then all set to and ate with great relish. That is, all but Naw Su. For some reason she had little appetite and ate only a few balls of rice and a small piece of pork. She seemed to be in a daze and left the circle to gaze across the valley with unseeing eyes.

There was no immediate change in the mother's condition. She was weak from the fever but seemed to have quite a little strength. There was much discussion as to what ceremonies should be undertaken in order to hasten her recovery. It was suggested that they should try leaving the demon in the forest. The father killed a chicken, and after the proper ceremonies had been held, he went out into the forest calling the *nats* to follow him. When he found a favorable spot, he begged them to stay there and enjoy the feast and leave the sick person alone. Even with that the sick woman did not improve.

Naw Su watched the proceedings with an inquiring mind. Would they succeed? Was this the right way to help her mother? Now that she was past the first flush of excitement over her return home the talk of the demons that went on all about her began to annoy her. She could not help contrasting it with the quiet way the Mama had taken care of the girls when they had fever. The Mama had said illness was due to bodily conditions and

that cleanliness and western medicines would cure them. She wished she had brought some of the wonder-working medicine with her but she doubted if her mother could have been persuaded to drink it, and as for cleanliness, the women would not even allow her to wash her mother's face.

As she was going down to the spring with the bamboo water joints, she found herself alone on the winding path. It was noon and few of the women would go at that time. As she trudged along, she thought of the water that they got for the school from the river. She remembered her baptism, and what the missionary had said about talking to God and asking for what one needed. Now was the time that she must have help. Why had she forgotten to pray? The teacher had told the children stories of Jesus and how he had driven out the devils when he was on earth. It might be one of the devils that was making her mother sick. She should pray. That was a method she could use.

As she was putting down her bamboos that she might drop on her knees, the devastating fear came that she had offended God. She had left school without permission and had eaten the feast to the *bg̃ha*. How could she ask God to hear her prayer? She had shut herself off from him.

The thought struck terror to her soul. She stood transfixed. She had lost out on both sides. No wonder the *nats* would not accept the feasts. She had been a traitor to them, and now she could not pray to God, for she had run away from him. The sweat poured from every pore of her skin and she felt

lost and hopeless. She slipped down on a wet stone and made no effort to rise. She sat there overwhelmed by a surge of horror, fear and defeat. She was undone and there was no power left to which she could appeal for help. She felt that everything was against her and she wished she was dead and free from it all. She lost all sense of time and knew not how long she sat there fumbling for something or for someone to cry out her misery. She could not give up her people. She could not! She could not! They were hers when life began and they would be hers while life should last.

Why were they so dirty, so different, so full of fear, so far beneath other people. They tried to live right, as far as they knew. She had loved to learn Bible verses at school. Now one popped right into her head: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Then: "Ask what you will in my name and it shall be done unto you."

"O God!" she cried, "big, big, big God, are you talking to me? Are you telling me that I can bring you to my people, that I can have them and Christ and heaven, that mother will get well? I ask you in Jesus' name . . . in the way the book says."

Then her mind went to her patient teacher. She remembered that Miss Maynard had told her that God had sent Jesus to show people that even if they failed sometimes because of weakness and fell away, that he would forgive them and that he would give them another chance—that they could always pray for what they needed.

Here was a ray of hope. It was like a flash of lightning in a dark night that makes everything as bright as day for an instant. Could she expect forgiveness after she had run away from school without asking forgiveness? Could she be forgiven for taking part in the heathen *nat* feast? Would Miss Maynard's God really hear her prayer?

She was half inclined to try, but she was shy. What if some of the children should come wandering down the path? "Get into the bushes," something seemed to say; "they will hide you from people. But she hesitated. "The teachers say that God can see and hear us everywhere. Perhaps he will hear me." With a great impulse of joy she jumped into the bushes that were crowding the path. She knelt there in the great silent cathedral of the forest and sobbed aloud: "Father, forgive me, hear me, save mother. Help us to love and trust and not hate and fear. That is all. No, no. Not all. Help me, and may I bring all of my people to thee." Thus quietly did she come out of the rank jungle of growth in her mind. Later, putting her bamboo joint down into shallow water, she listened as it gurgled into the joint and filled it. She felt better. This was the way of the water of life. She would take the water up to her house. They would need it.

When she got to the house, the women said her mother was sleeping.

CHAPTER XV

FROM the hour that Naw Su had kept her almost frantic tryst with God, her mother had slowly but steadily improved. Although Naw Su had dedicated herself to the redemption of her people, she had not dared to tell them. There were so many of them and they were so very sure of themselves. There was only one of her and they regarded her as a mere upstart. She was neither ashamed of the thing she had done nor afraid of them, but she could not seem to find a way of approach. So she waited.

The burden of the household cares fell upon Naw Su, for the father took the older girls with him to help him with the clearing of the forest for the next rice planting, which must begin as soon as the monsoon broke. He had decided to cut the trees on the hillside. He had elected to do this because when a lump of earth from that locality had been brought to his house and placed under his bamboo pillow, he had wonderful dreams of buying several elephants and using them to snake the logs down to the creek. He felt sure also that it was the place where the demons would disturb him the least, and that his crop would grow. He had to be very cautious because of the forecast

that the bamboo would flower that year and bring the people some calamity. He told his family of the fortunate dream that had led him to his decision, and he commanded all except the mother, who was still too sick to go down the ladder, to go with him to the selected place about two miles over the hills. There, as was his custom, he sacrificed a chicken to the demons who were supposed to rule over the site. He told the demons that he must use that plot of their ground in order to raise rice for his family. He pleaded with them not to disturb him, but to permit him and his girls to clear the tract, plant their rice and harvest it without molestation.

Naw Su had perforce gone with the others on the trip for the sacrifice, but she secretly prayed to her own God while she looked on. Here again was the battle between the traditional family superstition and her new found loyalty to a great spiritual power that as yet she knew little about. She had not wanted to go with the family, but if she did not, she knew the blame for any failure would rest on her, and perhaps, after all, she could best win them over by complying with their wishes. It was easy enough for the people of the school to talk, but they had never been a part of a heathen family.

The day following the sacrifice the father was up before daylight. He ordered Naw Su to cook the rice while he let the sick mother rest in bed. Then he told Naw Su she was to remain behind, care for the house, the mother, the pigs, the chick-

ens, and bring up the water. The older girls were told to take their *dahs* and follow him.

As Naw Su worked, she was continually turning her perplexities over in her mind. She had spent almost three years in the school, and yet she did not seem to know enough to make the people of her village over as she had been told she must be fitted to do. She had run away from home to go to school, and had not dared to return until they had called her back, and now she had run away from school. She was in a mess. She must go again to the big tree where she had first consciously met God on the day that her mother's life was spared.

It did not take her long to feed the pigs and chickens and turn them out to forage for the day. She then drew the mat, on which the family had sat for its morning meal, over to one side, and brushed the crumbs through the crack of the floor. There was not much sweeping to do. To be sure there was a pile of dirty rags in the corner, but no attention need be wasted on them. The mother did not expect much attention. She slept all of the morning, and when the day began to get warm, she squatted in the sun near the door. They were not a talkative people, so the mother and daughter had little to say to each other. She was lonesome for the chatter of the girls at school, and above all she longed to sit at Miss Maynard's feet and tell her all about her trouble.

She reflected that it was vacation by this time. The children would have gone home—some to the plains, some to the hills. There were none who

would come near her village, and if they did, she would not be able to see them. Because of the hill cultivation the people of the mountains lived far apart and there was little visiting between them unless there was a funeral or a wedding to call the people together. She would like to know what was going on in school. Was Miss Maynard still there? She had not looked well. How she wished she could be there to help her. Who had taken her place? She wondered if there were any new books from America. What fun it had been to read about the foreign people and to look at the pictures of their houses, their churches and their wagons and trains.

"I wish I had the book," she lamented. "If only I had brought the book home with me, I could have a good time reading it. I could go off into the woods and read it and sit and allow God to talk to me. Strange, even though you cannot see him or hear his voice you can see the world all about that he has made, and you know what he wants you to do if you sit still and listen after reading what he wrote years ago. Even our elders say they have never seen the book except when the teacher that I went away with brought it here. If I had one, I could be the first to read it to them. I might even get them to know that God was speaking to me as he did to the *wee* of old. But I am only a girl, and they would not want me to read to them. That would cause an elder to put himself beneath a woman, and that would never do." Then her thoughts trailed from one school scene to another.

"I am going back to school," she cried aloud.

"The teachers are right. I do not know enough, and I am not old enough to reach my people yet. When the rains come, and when the girls get through on the clearing so they can care for mother, I will go back." She had wandered beyond the crowded village site. She paused beneath her tree until she sensed that God was there, and that he approved, and then she went on about her work. She had her *dah* and began to cut dead branches. After they had fallen to the ground, she tied them into bundles that she might carry them on her head to the house. Then she went farther into the woods to look for fresh tips on the trees and bushes that she might take them home to eat with their rice. She knew the family was always hungry for them, but she knew nothing about vitamins and how necessary the fresh salad was to help balance the perpetual rice diet.

She came out into a cleared place where there was a vista off to the west. She sat for a while to allow her mind to wander along the distant line of the horizon. How she longed to run over the hills and get back to school. Then she began to wonder what they would do to her when she got back. She had seen some of the girls punished when they had run away as she had done. The native people had also taunted them with being poor weak Christians who were no good, and they would have to be expelled from the church until they repented. The admonitions of the pastor and the elders were enough to send cold shivers up and down the spine. Then there was the worse fear to

Naw Su, that if she should be expelled from the church, she might die and not go to the Christian's lovely heaven. She would have to fall into hell and there be subject to endless punishment. Probably they had already expelled her. The thought sent cold chills all over her and she was so weak that she could scarcely move.

How long she sat there she did not know. The sun had almost reached the top of the sky when she decided that she was a lost soul. Her heart was very heavy, and she could not think clearly. The fears that had troubled her before were as nothing compared with these. Life had no charm for her now, but she did not want to die and fall into that terrible hell. What could she do?

She tried to recall the teaching that she had received, to see if there was any way of escape from her terrifying plight. She remembered Miss Maynard had always talked of a God of love and pity. She was not hard like the native teachers and pastors. Perhaps it was because she had loved God and had known the right way longer. If she could only get to Miss Maynard and talk with her, she might find forgiveness and be happy again. How often she had told her that God would hear and answer prayer and that Christ had died on the cross that we might all be forgiven. She had prayed for forgiveness and her mother had begun to get well. Now she felt happy again, but she still wondered if the teachers would be as kind as God.

She must get back to the village. The fires were to be kept going and her mother would be wanting

her. If she stayed away too long, she would accuse her of being a thoughtless, willful child, intent on having her own way. She kept repeating the word "forgiveness." Miss Maynard had explained that it meant God had wiped the slate clean. All right, if God was like that, she was not afraid any more. She went back to the heap of firewood, lifted it to her head and trudged back to the village.

As she placed the wood against the wall beside them, she saw that the water joints were empty. Her mother was still quietly resting and she tossed the bamboos over her back and went to the spring, glad of the opportunity to return to her sanctuary and pour out her gratitude to God for his forgiveness. She said to God, "If you can forget, I can, and I will be happy."

After that, the simple traditional life went on from day to day. Naw Su sang and was happy as she joined the other women in the monotonous round of life. Some of them went to gather the cotton that had ripened in their rice clearings, and they rejoiced in the lightness of their heaped-up baskets as they trudged up the steep hillsides to their houses. They joked with one another and expressed the wish that water, wood and paddy were as light as the cotton that was like foam.

Soon there was a great pile of cotton in the corner of each house and the girls were set to ginning it. Naw Su was grateful for the diversion. She got down the rudely whittled pair of wooden rolling pins and fastened them into a wooden frame so that they looked like the old-fashioned American

clothes wringer that they used at school. She stuffed the white bolls against the rollers, and as they caught the fibers, they pulled them through, leaving the seeds to revolve around and around.

The cotton required a lot of attention before it was ready for use. After the seeds had been separated from the fiber, strips of bamboo were bent at one end like a one-sided bow. The string was stretched very taut, and as the women held it close to the mass of freed cotton and began strumming it, the cotton was caught up and it began to revolve around the twine in great white layers until it became such a bulk that the weaver would have to stop and pull it off. It was now smooth and the fibers were all running in the same direction.

When this was accomplished, another small-wheeled instrument was brought out, and as the crank was turned, a little belt ran over a big wheel and across and around a small one that went with considerable speed. A foot long spindle that was attached caught the fibers of cotton and spun them into threads. These were deftly pulled and held taut as they wound around the spindle. Hour by hour the amount of wound thread increased until it had all the spindle would hold.

To Naw Su the work became monotonous and she was glad when it was done. She longed to be in the great out-of-doors. When the women began to talk about the roots, the barks and the leaves that they would need for dyes, she volunteered to take her basket and *dah* and go out for them. She knew the blacks, the reds and the wild indigo blue that

was traditional in the weaving of the Karen garment. It required but a day to cut and bring in all they needed. She helped with the work of scraping the roots and washing them in the clear mountain stream. It seemed good to dabble in the water again as she had in childhood.

The simple loom was set up under the house, and her mother, spurred to action by the work she loved most, helped to stretch the long threads for the warp over the pegs that Naw Su had driven into the ground.

Just as they were about to begin weaving, operations were interrupted in a way that caused the whole village to stop and take part in a man hunt. The adventure brought the simple, primitive Karens to the attention of the whole country. To Naw Su it solved the problem of how to get back to school.

CHAPTER XVI

NAW SU'S father had been counting the days until he could burn the slash that was fast drying on his new field. He had been getting the family up early every morning and taking the older girls out to the mountain where they worked all day clearing off the edges and getting the brush away from the standing forest lest the fire leap from the dead trees to the living and start great fires. Such fires often devastated the mountain forest, burning until they had spent themselves, or until the rains came.

As much as he needed more help, he had not called Naw Su out for the work. It was not because she was younger than her sisters, but in some way he seemed to feel differently toward her. So he let her stay with her mother and perform the lighter tasks about the house. That left her alone much of the time and she was able to allow her imagination to have full play. She was constantly trying to plan how she was going to get around the obvious objection to her return to school. It was evident that her parents were planning to marry her off to some young man.

Her ears were ever alert to hear everything that was going on. Her parents were talking softly

one night about the "young pigeon" that was in danger of flying away. She immediately realized that they were following the Karen custom of talking in figurative language, and that they were planning for her marriage, a matter often settled by the Karens when their children were very young. Although they said nothing to her Naw Su knew what was in their minds, and since a girl could press her objection to a young man whom the parents had chosen, she was determined to make the very most of the privilege.

One day, as she was dreamily picking up the weaving threads, her mother called out, "Hear, you turtle dove! Stop that dreaming and bring me some of the bright red thread that you have in your hands. I need it right now. Come quickly. Come back or your *kala* will catch you wandering off and you will be sick. Come quickly."

Naw Su's senses were aroused. She gathered up the loose ends, wound them around a splinter, and took them to her mother.

Just then, two strange men appeared at the end of the narrow village street, and after looking first one way and then the other, they began to come rapidly toward them. They were soldiers. They carried guns and their bags swung from their shoulders as though they were heavy. The other village women saw them and scurried from sight. The children saw them, stopped their play and ran to hide behind the big clump of bamboo stumps that were in the central open space. Only Naw Su held her ground and met the men with a

steady gaze. Here were people from the outside world and they might bring her news of the school. Her curiosity was greater than her fear, so she stood quite still and held the shuttle in her hand until the soldiers reached her.

"Where is the *Sgaw's* (chief's) house?" they asked in Karen.

"Over there," replied Naw Su as she pointed to a house up the line.

"Is he at home?" He manifested the usual Karen shyness by moving slowly along without stopping. "Is he at home?"

"No, he is out in the clearing, making ready to burn the brush."

"Is it far to his field?"

"It is over the second range and on the path that leads to the south. You can get there in about three betel chews." That was a usual way of measuring time and short spaces. The unit was the time it takes to chew a betel leaf and nut: from a quarter to a half hour.

The men had now lost their shyness and paused. Naw Su looked them over carefully, noted the kind of embroidery that was woven into their *hsays* and knew they were men from nearer the plains and farther toward the west than her home. They looked as though they had travelled far. They were wet with sweat and their clothes were more soiled than men usually wore when they travelled. The thing that marked them was that they had guns. That was most unusual for the hill people, for they depended on their cross-bows, spears and *dahs*

for their weapons. These men must have some contact with the foreigners and they might know about her precious school.

It did not matter to her or to them that the guns they appraised so highly had long been discarded by the people of the West as antiquated. To the simple Karens they were as wonderful as though they had been the latest sporting rifles.

The men hesitated. They exchanged a few words in a dialect that Naw Su did not readily understand, but since she knew they were also Karens and only a different tribe, she did not fear them as did the rest of the women.

Finally, they said they would wait in the village and get some needed sleep and have a talk with the *Sgaw* when he returned, as he was sure to do in the afternoon. Then they turned toward his house, and after calling for permission, mounted the rickety ladder and disappeared into the open doorway. Hospitality demanded that the wife set out the betel box before them and ask them if they had eaten rice.

They replied that they had eaten rice in a village eight miles over the hills.

"Then you must be as hungry as tigers. I will cook for you. We always feed Karens but not the Burmese or Shans, for we fear them."

When the *Sgaw* came home to eat his evening rice, the women were busy with the chores. Naw Su did not have much time to stay about and learn why the men had come. She knew that it must be something of very great importance for them to

come bringing guns and leaving their work at the busiest time of the year. It did not surprise her to hear the *Sgaw* tell all of the men to come to his house as soon as they could after they had eaten rice.

When they came, there was scarcely room for them to squat, and the floor creaked under their combined weight. Once or twice, it seemed to give a bit and there was a scrambling away from the corner where most of the creaking came from, but the *Sgaw* assured them that he braced that corner from beneath and that it would not give way.

Then it was that the strangers revealed their mission. They had brought the most startling news that the village had heard for a long time.

They first reviewed facts with which they were already familiar. The white foreigners with their fire boats and their soldiers, who had such pale faces and wore such big head-dresses, and had wonderful guns, had gone up the big river and had captured the Golden Foot (the King of the Burmans) and had taken him away in a fire ship to some place—no one knew where. It seemed incredible that the great monarch, who possessed all of the wealth with which to purchase the invincible charms to protect himself and his many wives, should be taken captive. It proved that the white foreigners were supernatural people. But they were having a hard time in Burma, for even though the Burmese king had been captured two years before, the Burmese *Bos*, who had served as officers under him, were now scattered and were

starting their careers as dacoits (bandit leaders). They were burning villages and killing anyone who resisted them. The Burmans, who were really as frightened as the Karens, were trying to save their homes by feeding the *Bos* and giving them the money they demanded. Thus they were making it hard for the big white soldiers to catch the bandits. The black foreigners (Indians) wore the same big boots that the white men wore and they had heavy clothes and guns and therefore they could not get around the country as easily as the Burmans. So far no one had been able to stop the wholesale banditry that was springing up all over the country.

They told how the soldiers had talked with the white foreign teachers who had come to the big city, and the white teachers had told them if they would help them, they would give them guns and teach them to use them, and if the Karen young men would come forward, they would make them soldiers of the Queen of the White Foreigners, and they would be given money and guns for their own use. The white foreign teacher was a good man. It had always been found that if he said anything it was true. He had cured many of the sick children in the school and was really a teacher for the Karens. He could talk their language and he was not in league with the hated Burmese. Would they come and get guns and become fighters?

It took some time for this news to percolate into the simple minds of the villagers to whom the outside world was a great unknown to be greatly

feared. One thing aroused much interest, they would have guns with which to fight the Burmans. They would have a chance to strike back and to avenge all that they had suffered at the hands of their more powerful neighbors. They had just been hearing that some of the Karen villages to the north had been attacked by Burmans. Women had been killed, and children had been cut open with *dahs* right before the eyes of their mothers, and the men had nothing with which to defend them.

The speaker continued. One of the old officers of the Burmese king was the *Pongyi*. The villagers had heard of him as the Buddhist monk who had forsaken his "quest for merit by which to make future existences happy." They were told that by sitting still and thinking he expected to arrive at the place where one sees nothing, hears nothing, desires nothing. Now he was trying to get fame and wealth for himself in this world, even though when he assumed the yellow robe of monkhood he had declared that he had given up the world forever. He had now collected an armed band of men who were as greedy as himself and they were roving over the plains, killing, burning and robbing, with no one strong enough to stop them without guns.

The *Pongyi* had been chased by the white foreigner and their black allies, and he had been pursued from place to place by Burmans, leaving a well-marked trail of dead behind him. Now he had taken to the north and had already burned several Karen villages, for he seemed to think the

Karens would be easy to conquer, and he could find better hiding in the mountains that were covered with forest. If the Karens wanted to save themselves, it was time for them to put all private quarrels and differences aside and get together and drive out or capture the enemy. The *Pongyi* was a big man. He had all of the charms of the Burmans and Shans, and he had a belt of gold around his body that was so heavy that he could scarcely walk. The white officers had told the white teachers and had put up a sign on the courthouse, saying they would give five thousand rupees to anyone who would kill or who would capture the enemy alive.

Naw Su heard all of this from her hiding place back of the fireplace where she had squeezed herself as soon as the men gathered in the dark. She listened to every word and wished that she was a boy so that she could go after the big Burman.

The men sat far into the night talking things over. They consumed immense quantities of betel nut. Naw Su made herself useful by going to the neighbors and borrowing fresh pepper leaves to go with the arrack nuts, the lime and tobacco that went to make the appetizing and stimulating quids.

Finally it was decided that five of the strongest young men would go with the strangers to help defend their hill country and that they would put themselves under the leadership of these men who were pledged to the white foreign teachers and through them to the Queen of England, who

reigned over all of the country from her throne so far away. It was her fire ships and officers who were making themselves felt in the country. They had not only built the fire ships but they were also putting down iron rails along the ground, and they boasted that they would have fire wagons walking on them in a little while, and that one could go as far as the ocean in a day or two. What wonders these white foreigners were. They must have more charms than the Burmans ever dreamed of. They were ahead of them in every way, and the Karens had better join with them against their old enemy, even though it was hard to understand the white men sometimes.

Wild rumors ran through the country as the occasional peddler carried the news from place to place, or as parties returned from the bazaars, where they mostly went to buy salt and fish condiment. The women did not dare to go outside the village, except with their men, to work in the clearings. First the word had come that the big *Pongyi* had gone north, then that he had gone east, then south. It was finally told that his party had split and there were some watching every village for a favorable opportunity to attack—but the Karens, who knew the hilly country, were gaining on him and more and more of them were being armed. They now had hundreds of guns. They would soon capture him, and then they could hold up their heads, for they would be as big as the Burmans. All of the wild stories only added to the fear

of the women and children. They were afraid to go to the jungle for wood.

Naw Su was the exception. Her newly acquired habit of talking to God about everything had eliminated all fear. Her mother seemed to respond to her courage, for she went right on weaving with the girl's help. Often she sent Naw Su for wood and water. The girl would fling the bamboo joints over her shoulders and go off, praying or very softly humming the melodies of the hymns to herself. How she longed to sing to the people of the village. They could not help loving the church songs, but that would be to admit that she had accepted the foreign religion, and her people would only watch her more closely. She must get back to school and grow older and wiser there and then she would come back.

One day a small party of men came tearing through the village. They stopped just long enough for the women to cook them a pot of rice and they told how the big Burman had been captured. It raised Naw Su to the highest pitch of excitement, for young as she was, she realized that it marked a new era in the thinking and the lives of the Karens. One great source of fear was now removed.

The breath-taking story of the men ran something like this: "You know those white teachers that have been running over the hills have something fresh about them. They must have even more powerful magic than the white foreigner of the city, for they are the ones that have brought our

villages together as never before. They got guns for us and they have been the leaders in searching for the *Pongyi*."

"How did they catch him?" asked the *Sgaw*. All were eager for the details.

"Well, he ran from one mountain to another. He was seen here and there. He now seemed to be alone, and when those who were following him were captured, they all said that their big *Bo* (leader) had such powerful magic about him that they were all sure that no one could ever capture him. The Christian teachers only laughed and said that their God had driven out all of the devils and they were certain that they would capture him. The *Pongyi* seemed to think if he could get over the water shed into the Shan country that he would be safe, for he would then be beyond the sphere of the Christian influence.

"He was being chased so closely that his followers fled or were captured, so there was no one to cook rice for him. He did not know how to live on roots and herbs like the Karen soldiers. He got very hungry, and his belly was all bubbly inside. He could stand it no longer. As he went over a ridge, he saw a hut a little way below, which a farmer had just built on his clearing. He watched it for a long time and was finally satisfied that there was no one there but two women. They could not hurt him. He still had plenty of money in his belt. He went down to the hut, showed the women some coins, and in his most humble Burmese manner he asked them to please give him rice.

"It happened that the women were cooking rice for a small company of men that were a little way along the jungle path on the watch. They immediately suspected that the Burman so far up in the hills all alone was the very one the men were watching for, and for whom the reward had been offered.

"One of the women answered that they had rice and would give him some as soon as the other brought her wood for the fire so they could get it soft. The women did not even look at each other, but both understood, for instead of going after wood, the woman hurried down the jungle path and told the soldiers about the visitor.

"Then the woman was helped to gather up wood and she hurried back. The young teacher followed noiselessly, and paused where he could watch the hut. He waited there for a while. Soon the stranger was eating so greedily that he forgot to be careful.

"The guard sneaked up, and grabbing a woman's skirt that was hanging on a bush, he clapped it down over the *Pongyi's* head and shoulders. That shut off the *Pongyi's* sight and pinned his arms down. He tried to escape but the other men rushed in to help the teacher and soon over-powered him."

A great laugh went up from the listening company. What a joke that the great *Pongyi* should have a woman's skirt clamped down over his head. That was the last thing any man would want to have happen to him. There could be no greater insult. It was in itself a disgrace, and for a Karen to do such a thing to a Burman, especially to a

Pongyi, who was forbidden by his vows to even look at a woman, was the extreme injury.

Naw Su had crept so near the speaker and was listening so intently that she did not see her father pick up a winnowing fan and throw it at her to remind her to get back into a more respectful position. The thing that had struck her the most forcefully was that the Christian teacher had captured the great Bo. With that there came a renewed determination to return to school and learn more of the great people and of a religion that could make them want to rescue others from danger.

Perhaps some of the Christian teachers would now return through her village and she could follow back to school. She was certain her father and mother would not consent for her to go, for it was clear that they were planning to betroth her to a young man from another village whose father had come to eat rice with them several times of late. She was not going to be tied down. She was going to get back to the world of Christians and books. Then she would come back and set the people to singing all over the Karen hills.

CHAPTER XVII

VISITORS were now frequently coming and going in Naw Su's village of Tee Wa. How different from the former years when weeks would pass without the appearance of a single stranger, or any word from the outside world. Where formerly their range of thinking had been confined to their own narrow affairs and to petty village quarrels, now a buzz of excitement frequently stirred the people. The mutual danger from the dacoits and the menace of the Burmese over-lords had broadened their outlook and had brought a new element into their lives. They were slowly beginning their march forward.

People still travelled in groups for protection. When a party came through a village, they were eagerly questioned for news. Some still retained their native reticence and would answer every question by the old familiar, "I don't know." But one day Naw Su's uncle, the one who had brought her home, appeared with three men, all younger than himself. They went to his house and lay on the mats, for they were all very weary.

Before Naw Su's aunt could get the rice cooked for them, they were all asleep and snoring loudly. Naw Su happened around every few minutes on

one pretext or another, for she was eager to know what was going on. She brought water for her aunt and set down the heavy containers with a jolt, vainly hoping to awaken the sleepers. Her aunt kept warning her that if she awakened them too suddenly their *kalas*, which might be wandering during their sleep, would not get back to their bodies before they regained consciousness and they might get sick as the result. Naw Su was not silenced, for she was alert to hear all that was going on. So eager was she that she defied the very devils themselves and kept walking over the creaky floor, but the tired men slept on, and it was near sun-down before they began to stir.

Finally, they got up and stretched themselves and took a deep draught of the water that Naw Su had brought, then cupped and filled their hands and washed their faces and squatted down again. Their rice, which had been long cooked and left waiting in the pot half buried with hot ashes, was now dumped into the long family tray of wood and set before them. Fresh greens and fish condiment were placed beside it, and they were soon too busy molding rice balls and tossing them into their mouths to talk. It did not take them long to clean out the big dish, and when the woman offered more, they politely replied that their bellies were full. Each rose and taking great mouthfuls of water rinsed their teeth and spat through a crack in the floor. Then, having observed the niceties of etiquette, they sat down again with grunts of complacency.

Naw Su came to pick up the tray and to brush away the kernels of rice that they had dropped during their eager eating.

"The Karens who follow the new white teachers are queer," remarked her uncle, as he rolled his chew of betel. "The villages that follow that teaching do not keep up our ancestral customs. They act differently from us. Of course we used to have feuds, and we used to go on forays against the other villages, but we always did it after consulting the chicken bones and after holding feasts to the *nats* to get their help. Now these people that they call Christians just go down on their knees and talk with no one listening. They claim that the great spirit *Ywa* hears them. It might be true, for they usually get what they go after."

Naw Su was listening intently. She was more interested than she dared to allow the people of the village to know. Before she had stopped to think of the possible consequence to herself, she had blurted out, "Was the guard who caught the *Pongyi* a Christian?"

Her uncle turned toward her with a sneer and said: "You little pullet. What do you know about Christians? Are you one who followed them when you were in school?"

As quick as a flash Naw Su realized that she had come near revealing a secret that she had carefully guarded. If the family should learn that she had broken with the family traditions and had become a Christian, they would do everything in their power to prevent her return to school.

"All of us had to go up to worship every seventh day," she replied slowly and cautiously. "We learned to sing their songs, and I liked them," she added with a flash of courage.

"You had better look out for yourself. If you follow them, you will not get the good husband that your parents have picked out for you."

Then, thinking that this was enough attention to give to a mere girl, the uncle turned toward the other men, and they began recounting the results of their journey. It was the way Karens passed their time, for there were no books to read, no newspapers to keep them informed.

By listening Naw Su learned that it was the Christian teacher who had caught the bandit leader. "It was the same one who got the guns for us," her uncle said, "the one who called all of the men from all of the villages to rise up and fight, the one who taught us how to use the guns and who was not afraid to lead when we went after the Burmans. We never could have done it if he had not made us all get together. We Karens are a wild and simple people. I guess we have lost some of the things that our ancestors knew, because we lost the book. Everything is written down there, and some of the young Karens are learning to read. Anyway, without the younger white brother who kept the book, and who wants to give it back to us, the *Pongyi* would still be living, and the Burmese would still be forcing us to hide in the mountain jungles like animals."

This was a long speech for her uncle to make,

and it astonished her. Could it be possible that the way was opening for her people to be taught? "O God," she cried in her heart, "I must get back to school. I must! I must! Do not let them stop me. I want to know enough to teach them."

One of the other men took up the story. "It is strange that it was the followers of the white teachers who dared go the farthest. I had never been over toward the east near the big water-shed except when I went to hunt. We never dared to go near the villages in those days. We were strangers and we fought each other, but these Christians say we Karens are brothers, that we must all stand together and not fight each other. How funny that just believing in the great *Ywa* (God) makes them brave, while the more we believe in the *nats* the more afraid we are. There must be something in this Christian business after all."

Another added: "It was a Christian teacher who actually pulled the woman's skirt over the *Pongyi's* head. That was a brave thing to do. We think it is a disgrace to even touch a woman's skirt. It would have made me feel ashamed, but he just grabbed it as though it had been a stick of bamboo and overpowered the Burman with it." At this the men all indulged in a hearty laugh. It filled them with delight to think that they had in some way shared in the revenge on a Burman and a monk, whose yellow robe was so revered and feared by the people on the plains.

By this time one of the older men of the village had wandered into the house, and he sat and lis-

tened as he softened his fresh betel chew. Then he began: "The *Wee* (prophet bards) who gathered us around the fire for generation after generation and sang their songs to us always told us that the younger white brother would come to us from across the sea in great ships with white wings and that when they brought the book, we would then be free from Burman oppression. This must be the fulfillment of what they foretold."

One of the young men caught up the conversation as soon as the elder paused to clear his mouth. "That is what they told us when we were out hunting the *Pongyi*. They said they had come to tell us good news, that we would not have to flee from the Burmans any more, that we could learn to read the new book on white paper, that it would make us all one, that we could be strong to defend the hills and become just as powerful as the Burmans."

By this time quite a company had gathered to listen to the latest bulletin from the front. Naw Su had to withdraw, but she was still in hearing distance and nothing escaped her keen mind.

"The *Pongyi* was very proud, just like all Burmans. One place that he went to rob the people the villagers had nearly all said they would follow the white brother, and they had built one of the worship places, a great big house that would hold all of the people of the village, with a place at one end for the preacher to stand and talk. That made the *Pongyi* very angry. He took his men up into the place and declared that it was no place to worship

because it did not have a pagoda or an image of Buddha. Then he got up and shouted that he had abolished the white man's religion, that all of the books must be burned, and that all of the people must make offerings to him as a monk of the Buddha."

"What did the Karens say to that? Were they not terribly frightened?"

"You would have thought they would have been frightened and that they would have fled to the forest, but Christianity does something strange to them. The *Pongyi* went out after telling his men to ruin the place with their *dahs*. The Karens stood right up to them and told them they knew their God was the real living God who had made the world and all of the Karens as well as the Burmans and the white foreigners. They said the *Pongyi* would have to suffer for what he had done to the church. Every Karen would join in the fight. They would have to send to the city for more guns, but they could get them and they could get more and more people. They were going after the *Pongyi* and they would get him even if they had to go over the hills into the Shan country. They were not afraid any more, and they would fight for their rights. Their new religion had given them courage and it had bound them all together."

"The whole thing is strange," said Naw Su's uncle. "They did not harm him or kill him when they had caught him, for they said the white teacher had told them to take him to the city alive, for the Queen's officers wanted to see the man

alive. Probably they wanted the fun of sticking their *dahs* into him, and to see if his charms could really stop gun shots like they said. I expect they wanted to see him writhe and squirm and to have a good time with him. Who could blame them?"

Another interrupted: "But we were told by the boys who went to the city that they did not do that. The white teacher said it was right to capture him, but no man should be killed until he was given a chance to prove himself innocent. They turned him over to the government and it paid the men five thousand pieces of silver for getting him, just as they said they would."

"Whoever heard of so much silver!" they cried. "It must have been more than an ox-cart full. Five thousand pieces of silver!"

"Then the Karen teachers all got together and talked things over. It did not take them long. They went to the white teachers and told them they did not want the money. It was too much for them to have. They did not know how to use it. They only wanted a little to buy some rice, some warm, thick blankets like the foreigners use, some salt and some rotten fish condiment. They wanted to give the rest to the white foreigner to build a school and a place of worship for the Karens in the city. That would show the Burmans that they were beginning to be a great people.

"This pleased the white teacher and he said it was good of them to think of others, that it was like the Christ that they worship. They gave some of the money to each man who had left his own

village and had followed the guards. Then they said they would build the school and when it was done, they would call all of the people in to see it, and they could all use it for a church and for a school for their children, for it would be *their* building."

Not one word of all this escaped Naw Su. She was thrilled at all she heard, and it only made her more determined that she would go back and see the new school building and learn all that could be taught in it. Perhaps she might even be a teacher there some day. While she was dreaming over all this, her mother called her to go and bring some water from the spring. She held back as long as she could, but when her mother continued to call, she finally slung the straps of the bamboo joints over her forehead and ambled down to the spring.

When she reached it, she went behind the bushes and under the tree that had been her trysting place with God fell on her knees and thanked him for all that had happened, and asked him in his great power to make it possible for her to get back to school.

That night her father came in from the clearing where he had been working with the older sisters. They had cleared away nearly all of the brush that was on the edge of the standing forest and it was but three days off from the time set by the village soothsayer to fire the fallen timbers. He had not heard of the wonderful conversation that had gone on in the uncle's cottage. He did not care for the outside world, and when Naw Su tried to tell

him, he stopped her and said that tomorrow she must go out and help finish the clearing of the brush. He had allowed her to lie around home long enough. She was a big strong girl now, and she must help more with the family work.

There was nothing to do but to obey her father's command and to do her best to help prevent the fire from working wide destruction, as it would if it should leap over the line into the dry leaves of the uncut forest. The clouds were rolling up from the valley. One or two showers were taken as the forecast that the monsoon would soon break. Could the burning be done before the rain wet the brush? Her father set out offerings of rice and even killed a small fowl to appease the demons and to insure their good-will while he and his girls worked to the very limit of their strength.

Naw Su was full of mixed feelings. She wanted to get back to school before the rains broke, for after that the travelling would be difficult. She did not like the work on the brush, but she remembered that God had said in his ten commandments that father and mother must be obeyed. Besides, she felt a deep affection for her family, and even though she was planning to be away, she wanted to help them to be well fed. She also recognized the Karen standard of loyalty and she did not want a bad name in the village, for God seemed to tell her that she was coming back to them some day with a great message. She did fear that the work might hinder her from falling in with some person with whom she could return to school.

If she could run away, she could get to the village over the ridge to the west. She had heard that some of the people there had been baptized. Some of the children were planning to go to school. If she could leave home after the others had started to work, then she could take the fork of the road leading to the west and get away. She would work until they were ready for the fire, and then she would slip away. God must have put the fine plan into her head.

CHAPTER XVIII

THINGS had changed at school. Miss Maynard's health had failed and she had been sent home to America. Naw Su wondered if it would have been different if she had stayed at the school and helped her through the summer vacation instead of going to the cool mountains, to help save her sick mother.

She soon discovered that the new Mama, Miss Jones, who had been sent from America to take Miss Maynard's place, was very different. Miss Jones had not yet learned the language. She did not understand the ways and the thoughts of the people, but she had come from America with strong convictions of what it would take to change the heathen. She had a fine education, and during her few years of teaching in America she had shown great ability. At least that was what the recommendation said that was presented to the Missionary Board when she went out to Burma to teach. But she soon proved that there was a great difference between being able to teach successfully in her own environment and teaching among a primitive people.

Naw Su had returned to school with great enthusiasm. She had been aroused by a new convic-

tion that she must help her people in their march forward. She had joined a party of Christians who were going down from the hills. Her father had looked stunned when she told him, but her uncle had urged that she be allowed to go, that she learn how to read, and then come home and teach the rest of them. He even promised to take her place during the burning, so her father had said no more.

She knew she would be punished for leaving school without permission, but she was ready to take it. She hoped she would not be asked whether she had had a part in the feast to the *bgha*. She knew it was a heathen custom and as far as any will of her own was concerned she had given it up.

She made no effort to explain to others what she thought her God would understand. Like most Karens she did not bare her thoughts. She had wanted to be obedient and to help her mother. She had joined with the others in the heathen feast when the elders had said it would make her mother well. Her mother did get well, but Naw Su secretly held the faith that it was because she had prayed to the true God.

All of the way back to school she was planning to tell Miss Maynard all about it. She was sure she would understand and that she would not punish her too severely. But here was the new Mama who had come from the west. She did not know the Karen language and Naw Su knew that she could not make the situation clear to her. There was no use to try. She would not understand that in Naw Su there were two forces pulling in opposite direc-

tions. To Miss Jones heathen was pure heathen and Christians must have nothing to do with the old degrading life. If they could not drop all heathenish customs, they were not worthy to be included in the new church. They were not a part of the body of Christ.

As soon as the new children had been registered in the school, had been bathed and shorn and had been started on the road to culture and cleanliness, one of the Karen teachers came to Naw Su, squatted on the mat beside her and asked her why she had run away from school just before the annual examinations.

"My uncle called me and I had to go. My mother was very sick."

"But you should have waited and gotten the Mama's permission. That was a very bad thing to do. You went just before the test for promotion. Now you cannot go on with your class. You will have to stay in the same standard for another year, for if one is not here when the inspector comes to give the examination, he will not allow her to be promoted."

Naw Su's head drooped lower and lower but she made no reply.

"And you took part in the feast to the *bgha*. Do you not know there is no such thing as what the unconverted Karens call the *bgha*? That is a heathen belief. When you were baptized, you promised to have nothing to do with the heathen way. You will have to be judged by the church. Probably they

will put you out, and then if you should die, you would not go to heaven."

It was not that the teacher was unkind, but the Karens, who came out of the old ways and accepted the new Christian way of living, were often more severe with their weaker brethren than the missionaries. This young teacher had undergone opposition from her own parents when she had refused to be married off.

When she learned that she might be excluded from God's church, her courage broke. It would be too terrible if she could not stay in school, and even if she was allowed to stay she would be so ashamed if she could not go along with her old class where Miss Maynard had told her that she was considered the leading scholar. She had not been promoted by the inspector, and she was already in disgrace with the younger girls. She had lost face. She might even be sent away, and there would be nowhere to go but home. Perhaps she had better go down to the big river and throw herself in, but Mr. Simms had once preached on the text, "Thou shalt not kill." He said that it meant one's self just as it meant others—and so if one really tried to be a Christian, no matter what happened, one could not take the Karen way out.

The new terror struck very deeply into her heart. If she drowned herself while she was expelled from the church and the school, she would surely go to hell. There she would encounter trouble and torment beyond all endurance. She would

not risk it. She would run back to the hills, hide in the jungle and live on roots and herbs. She would not return to her village, for she could not stand it there.

She broke into sobbing. The teacher tried to find out what was the trouble, but Naw Su would not answer any questions and drew herself away when the teacher put her hand on her shoulder.

"You are a stubborn little girl," said the teacher, after she had tried in vain to get a response from her. Just then Miss Jones came through the girls' room, and when she saw the two seated on the mat, and realized that Naw Su was crying, she asked what was the matter in English.

The teacher replied in her poor broken attempt at English, "She ran away from school. She lived in her village. She did not take her examinations. She ate the heathen feast. She not talk to me. I can't make her say 'sorry.' What the Mama think we do to her?"

All of this sounded very bad to the new Mama who had come expecting that all of the new Christians were saints. She tried to talk to Naw Su in English, but got no response. It only made the child draw more closely into her shell of silence for security. She began to think the girl was stubborn. With her scant knowledge of the country, the Karens, and her lack of knowledge of child psychology, Miss Jones came to the conclusion that it was original sin, and that the best way to deal with Naw Su was to punish her. However, a little doubt crept into her mind. Perhaps she did not understand

enough about the case. Finally she decided to talk with the missionary before taking any extreme measures. She left Naw Su and the teacher with a few words of admonition.

Naw Su did not eat rice with the other children. She sat on her mat all curled up that afternoon and finally dropped into a fitful sleep. She would not talk to anyone when she awakened and secretly was weighing in her mind whether she should run away before beginning another day of anguish. She lay there half awake and half asleep until she was awakened by the loud clang of the rising bell. She arose automatically, and when she was assigned one of the class rooms to sweep, she went about it absent-mindedly. Naw Paw Tu was assigned to the task with her and she took the occasion to show her superiority. Naw Paw Tu had of late been jealous of Naw Su's greater favor and her beauty and brilliance. Now she said:

"So they are going to put you out of the church?" Naw Su had begun to feel better after the night of rest, and she was getting hungry, but now her fears were again aroused and shame flooded her mind. She bowed her head very low and began a vigorous sweeping with the coconut fiber broom. She followed the others to the eating place, half dazed. Though she was very hungry, the rice had no sweet flavor.

She found herself in the class room later, but she was not studying. In fact she did not know what the teacher had asked the class to do. She was planning how she could get away somewhere and hide

when Mr. Simms walked in. He looked about the room and asked if Naw Su was present. Her heart almost stopped beating, for she knew she was to be questioned some more and she had nothing to say. She was petrified by fear. She watched him from under her eye-lashes and hoped she might be able to sneak out of the door. Since that was impossible, with so many eyes on her, she decided she would just sit still and say nothing and let them do what they would.

When Miss Jones said, "Naw Su, stand up," she got to her feet. Instead of the stern look that was on Miss Jones's face, Mr. Simms regarded her with a friendly smile and said, "Naw Su, we are glad you have come back to school. I want to ask you about your village, for I have never been there. Will you come and tell me about Tee Wa? It must be a nice place, for its name means white water." His smiling face and pleasant manner gave her assurance and she followed him out of the room. Perhaps there would be some way out for her after all. Miss Maynard had talked much about forgiveness. Was this it? She was glad Mr. Simms could speak her language. She might be able to make him understand the storm of conflict in her heart. There might be a way for her to remain in school and regain her place.

He was very kind and patient. It is not easy to win the confidence of a young Karen. They are full of fears and their natural shyness and caution makes it very difficult to get a word out of them. At last the girl dried her tears and she told him

she wanted to stay in school. He pointed out the mistake that she had made in running away. He told her she would have to remain in her same old room for a while at least. He said it was a serious thing to go back and eat with the evil spirits after she had professed to give her heart to Christ and was trying to learn his way.

He admitted that old family ties and customs were very strong, and that it was but natural for her to want to see her sick mother and do all she could for her. He said he would forgive the first offense, but for the sake of keeping the church pure and strong that he would have to tell them about it and they would have to take some action. He would plead for her, and she must not be too frightened, for even if they put her out, it would only be until she acknowledged that she had done wrong. She would soon be restored to membership.

He waited, hoping that she would speak, but she said nothing.

The next Wednesday evening when the members of the church gathered for their local prayer meeting, which all of the school was required to attend, Naw Su was among those who were called to meet the pastor and the deacons after the main meeting was over. They questioned her about leaving the school without permission, and about taking part in the ceremonies to the family demons. She had little to say. Some were in favor of giving her the strictest discipline in order to make her an example to others in the hope that it would prevent them from doing the same thing. This was a matter that

often came up. Others thought she was too young to realize what the reversion to heathenism would involve. She had done it out of loyalty to her family, and not through disloyalty to her new found faith. She had suffered much. She was losing a year in school, but she was willing to begin again and carry on.

Finally, they excused her that they might discuss the matter among themselves. They suggested that she should be brought before the church and publicly told that she had made a great mistake, but they would not expel her for the first offense. She must be more careful in the future, and she must not leave school without permission. As a member of a Christian church, she must understand that she should have nothing to do with the works of darkness.

The next Sunday the church took up the matter and followed the recommendation of the pastor and deacons. Naw Su felt that she had been relieved of a great burden. Life took on a new meaning for her and she began to regain her old position and prestige. She did not like the new Mama, however. She avoided her as much as possible. She allowed Naw Paw Tu to advance to first place with her. As her school work was a review, she made the most of the opportunity to read and enjoy the many books that had come from America.

CHAPTER XIX

A FEW months later, when the bell rang for the girls to get up and begin doing their school chores, Naw Su turned restlessly on her mat and felt of her head, which seemed to be as large as a paddy basket. She was hot and uncomfortable, and when she tried to rise, she fell back on her mat. Naw Paw Tu, who was now the monitor, asked her why she did not get up.

Naw Su turned her face to the wall, groaned and would not answer. She only knew that she felt very weak and miserable. The older girl put her hand on her forehead and finding it very hot said, "You have a fever. You must go to Mama for medicine."

Naw Su shrugged her shoulders and shuddered at this, for the thought of foreign medicine was very repugnant to her. She had often helped Miss Maynard give the girls the dreaded quinine, but she had never had to take any of it herself. She had made up her mind that she never would. She would get some Karen roots and herbs which some of the other girls had brought with them and were keeping hidden. She would take them.

When Naw Paw Tu urged her to go to Miss Jones, she made a strenuous effort to rise. She

would go out to the bathing place and pour cold water over her head and cool off. She thought she would then be all right. She had not reckoned with the severe attack of malaria that had gripped her. She reeled and would have fallen headlong had she not slumped down. She rubbed her eyes and head and shook herself, but it did no good. She toppled over on the mat and began to groan. Naw Paw Tu was frightened and ran to call Miss Jones.

Miss Jones came quickly, and when she saw Naw Su on the floor, she said in an abrupt manner that which seemed very rude in the Orient, "Get up! What is the matter with you? Have you a fever? If so, come to the sick room and I will give you some castor oil and quinine."

Naw Su made no move. It was as though she had not heard. Then the impatient Westerner took hold of the blanket that Naw Su was trying to pull over her and gave it a yank. At that the girl pulled it back and gathered it around her and lay still more quiet. Miss Jones felt that her authority was being challenged and she was in a hurry to get out to the garden where she had sent a group of girls to wait for her. She could not waste her time with a stubborn Karen girl who would not listen to her.

She gave the blanket another tug and raised her voice as she ordered Naw Su to get up at once and go to the sick room where she could be given the medicine. She did not intend to be unkind. She had come out to help the poor people and she loved

them, but there were such a lot of things to be done and all of them needed her supervision. She had studied in one of the best normal schools in the states and she was now putting into practice the things that she had learned.

She finally turned and went out to superintend the work in the garden and left Naw Su alone. The girl did not move. Her mind was hazy, but one thing was fixed—she was not going to the ever-dreaded sick room. One girl had died there last year and her *kala* might come back at any time. No, she would not go. She would get out and run home first, but when she tried, she could not lift herself from the mat on the floor. So she lay there in dull rebellion until the girls came back to get ready for their breakfast.

Miss Jones had told them that Naw Su was really very sick, and that if she had not obeyed her orders and gone to the sick room, they were to use her mat for a stretcher and take her there. They had no choice but to carry out her orders. Miss Jones threatened Naw Su with punishment if she tried to get out of the room. She must lie still and give the medicine that they had forced on her time to time. The sick girl's mind was in a daze. She felt as if the whole world were revolving around. Her head was bursting. Her body was now bathed in sweat, and she wanted to fling the blanket from her, but Miss Jones had ordered her not to take it off.

Finally, as the perspiration began to pour from her, her mind cleared. "Here I am in the sick

room. I don't like Miss Jones. She doesn't love me. I can't make her understand. She can't talk Karen. She thinks there is no medicine but that bitter English stuff. I don't like it. I will not take any more of it. It is not our kind of medicine. It will poison me. I could not even eat the queer food that she eats. I want to learn, but I do not want to study under Miss Jones. I wish there was another school. I wish Mama Maynard would come back. I liked her. She talks Karen. She understands us." Thus her now more lucid mind ran on and on until she dropped to sleep from sheer exhaustion.

She felt better the next day. There was no fever, but she was still weak and dizzy when she tried to move about. On the second day she thought she must get up and go about her duties—not because they interested her, but because she had become accustomed to the dull, monotonous round.

Alas, the morning found her shaking from cold. As the chill gathered force, it seemed to her that she was shaking the whole building and she grabbed everything she could find in the sick room with which to cover herself. The chill soon turned to fever and again she wanted to throw away all covering. Her plans for getting up and for getting out of the dread, lonely sick room were frustrated. She fell limply back on the mat and swallowed the dose of quinine that Miss Jones had sent by a helper. Again the sweat came and her blanket was as wet as if she had been wearing it in the rain.

Miss Jones came in to see how she was, but as the muddled Naw Su associated her with her illness,

she would have nothing to say to her. She pretended to sleep. Finally the Mama went out, wondering what she should do next. Mr. Simms had advised her to let the girl alone for a while.

After a week of suffering, the re-occurrence of alternating chills and fever was less frequent and the attacks were lighter, so Naw Su began to feel a little better. She did not care what happened to her. If they wanted to keep her in the sick room, it was quite all right with her. One of the girls brought her books and she was reading all that her poor sick eyes would stand, always alert for footsteps, ready to hide the book beneath her when she thought Miss Jones might be approaching. She almost quivered with delight over a collection of *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, and she would search out the Bible stories and read them and try to tell them in the same beautiful language. School had been monotonous because she had done her work thoroughly the year before and it was indeed a punishment to do it over when her keen mind was so eager to learn new things.

She was out of step with the school and the church. She did not even have a desire to understand and work with Miss Jones. She had lost her leadership with the girls, but books had not failed her. She found an ever-increasing delight in them. One day when Mr. Simms looked in on her, she shattered the Karen custom of reticence and begged him to allow her to read all of the books in his library.

He told her if she would not run away any more,

would obey Miss Jones, and would always read a portion of God's word first, he would lend her books that she would enjoy and that would help her. He knew the girls were too much given to thinking and concealing their thoughts. He had seen some strange outbursts of temperament. Sometimes they would get to crying or laughing and they could not stop. They would get mad at some little thing and would carry the grudge for months. There were always some who would not speak to each other.

Although he did not realize it, Naw Su was trying to save herself from the period of doubt through which so many of the girls passed. What was this new religion with its new ways? Was it the true religion, after all? She had learned that there were many religions in the city where the school was. There were many Burman pagodas and the yellow robed priests, whom they feared, went around every morning begging rice from their followers. Women would get up early to cook for them, for they came at day-break. Then the black foreigners, whom they called Indians, brought their religion, and she could often hear their Moslem leaders call from a tower near-by for them to get up and be at their prayers. To whom did they pray? Did they get answers as she surely had to hers when she asked God to make her mother well?

Then a thought struck her. She, too, had been sick. She was still sick. She and Miss Maynard used to pray for the sick girls. They got well. Per-

haps Miss Jones had not really learned how to pray, and that was why the girl whose *kala* she feared had not gotten well. When she considered the matter, she realized that Miss Jones had seemed to depend entirely on the medicine. She had not even told her to pray to get well. She realized also that she had been too sick to think of it herself.

She was now glad to be alone. She felt self-conscious and did not want the other girls to see her praying. Was that because they knew she had run away and had eaten the feast to the *nats*? Had it made God, who came so near to her by the spring at home and who had cured her mother and had allowed her to come back to school, angry? If she died now, with Miss Jones and all of the church against her, would she fall into hell?

Miss Jones had dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Simms that evening. There was another guest, Mr. Walton, a missionary from a neighboring city. They had finished their dinner and the servant had cleared the table, but as they had a punka in the dining room to keep them cool, they lingered in the breeze that was created by the great fan which was kept moving by a cord pulled by one of the school-boys.

Miss Jones had much to say about the country that was new and strange to her. She dwelt on the difficulties of the language with its six tones, and the awful gutturals that she could never twist her tongue around. Then she talked of her experiences with the girls. It was hard to understand them. They would sulk and they would not answer her

questions. She thought Naw Su was the worst case in the school. They were all bad enough, but she had had more trouble with Naw Su than with all of the others put together.

The visitor had been in the country a great many years. He was credited with knowing the Karens and with unusual ability to get along with them. He told her that she must learn the language as quickly and as thoroughly as possible, and that she must also learn to understand the people. "It is a good thing that we cannot talk with the people at once, for if we could, we would prove ourselves to be so ignorant of their ways that they would put us down as fools. We Americans are too impatient. We want to make the world over in a day. It cannot be done. Time is an important element. Even we Westerners, who have been Christians for generations, have not any too much Christianity. We have not yet understood what Drummond calls 'The Greatest Thing in the World' in his recent book by that title. He is right. It surely is love."

Then he asked about Naw Su and her history. They told her story quite in detail, for she had made a great impression on Mr. and Mrs. Simms. He listened to the account of her long trek home after she had run away from school, then of her return without the consent of her parents.

"What did you do to her?" asked Mr. Walton.

"The school authorities made her take her work over."

"Had she done her work well? Was she a good student?"

"One of the very best. The church did better. It simply lectured her publicly and allowed her to begin again."

They were a little surprised that the old man had asked them so many questions about the action of the school and church. Then he questioned Miss Jones as to her attitude toward the girl and pointed out discreetly that possibly she did not have enough love for the girl and too little faith in her.

"This is an interesting case," he said. "I wonder what has happened to the girl as the result of all this. You say you have brought her back to the church. Have you brought her back to God? I wonder if your lack of faith in her, after she risked so much to return, has not had as much to do with bringing on the fever as the change from the hills to the plains. One who does not know the mother tongue and the traditions and taboos of these people should be very slow about judging them. They are naturally cautious, shy and secretive, and they are afraid to talk until we have won their full confidence. It takes infinite patience and love to gain that. If we are going to win them, we must identify ourselves with them. From what you have told me, I feel that your little girl is to be pitied rather than blamed."

Miss Jones fidgeted, but as soon as Mr. Walton had stopped, she said crisply, "We must maintain discipline. We cannot allow the girls to flaunt our authority. We must make them obey. They come down to us infested, dirty and evil smelling, and we are expected to make something out of them."

They are not going to get the upper hand of me."

Mr. Walton smiled as she spoke: "We older missionaries often say, 'When you have been in the country as long as I have . . .' I know we must irk you by saying it so often, but there is a lot to be learned. Though I have been among the Karens thirty years, I do not profess to fully understand the Orientals, and certainly not the Karens. I still need to get the view of the man who died on Calvary for them. Take your little girl, for example. She fears to be outside the church because you have told her she will not go to heaven when she dies. Heaven is not a place. It is where the love of God rules. It should be right here in this compound. Our first mission is to get people in touch with God so that the love of Christ can pulsate through them. That is the only way we can lift a people or an individual. When faced with the threat of being expelled from the church, the girl may have stammered out repentance, but did the action of the church leave her with more love of God in her heart? It may be she is being torn by a conflict between what we want her to do and what she feels she ought to do."

"What do you think she really wants to do?" asked Miss Jones, who had become rather nonplussed while Mr. Walton was speaking.

"It may be she wants to make progress in the school because she wants to satisfy her pride in becoming an educated woman. She may think the school offers her entrance into a new and more interesting way of life."

"Is that a good thing?" asked Miss Jones.

"I do not think that the mere development of her personal pride would make her gentle and more Christlike. That would come through her willingness to seek to know and to do God's will. When his love and spirit begin to flow through her, she will live up to the highest purposes of the church and school. You know He compared the Kingdom of Heaven to a little child because a child can grow."

When she finally arose to go, Miss Jones was still arguing for more discipline to take the stubbornness out of Naw Su.

Mr. Walton made a last brave effort to help her by saying, "But you could not beat it out of her."

"Then what can I do?"

"Christ and his love must take the place of your desire to rule by force. It is when Christ comes in that old things pass away and all things become new. Good-night, Miss Jones. It has been interesting to see you. I wish I could remain over a day and see the little girl. I still believe she has good stuff in her."

Miss Jones did not sleep much that night, even though she was very tired. She was bothered by what Mr. Walton had told her, and she might have brushed it aside had not the *tauktu* (a lizard about a foot long, reddish brown in color with rows of black and purple dots running the length of its body) moved into the roof of the house. She had often watched it come down on the wall near the lamp to catch the insects that had been attracted by

the light. But just now some urge had stirred it to give its peculiar call from which it gets its name. It was maddening to hear its almost human voice call out in the quiet of the night *tauktu . . . tauktu . . . tauktu . . . err-r.r.* It was not strange that a newly arrived missionary doctor, hearing this call for the first time, thought it was someone in distress calling for his services! When Miss Jones thought she was about ready to drop off to sleep, the answering call came from a nearby tree, *tauktu . . . tauktu . . . tauktu . . .* (Would it ever stop?) *tauktu . . . err-r.r.* At unpredictable intervals during the night the calls were repeated. They were nerve-wracking. The tired lady tossed and turned. The mosquito net stifled her, but she dared not raise it.

When would that *thing* call out again? She wished she had a gun and could shoot it. What did it mean? What a place this was! There were stubborn girls and insects and now lizards to make life miserable. As she punched up her pillow, the thought kept coming: What did Mr. Walton mean when he took Naw Su's part? Was he going to be easy with the girl while she was flaunting her discipline? Everything was wrong. That girl ought to be punished. She would do it herself. Oh, that horrible lizard! Why can't he give me a moment's peace? It was almost dawn before she caught a few moments of sleep, troubled by dreams of Naw Su and lizards and mosquitoes.

CHAPTER XX

NAW SU was beginning to grow up. Her mother had recognized that and had sent down two skirts that she had woven for her daughter to be worn as she approached maturity. It was no longer becoming for a girl so well grown to wear the single loose garment. Although the *hsay* covered her from neck to ankles, now that she was no longer a child but a budding young woman, Naw Su must wear the garments proper for her age.

The *nees* (skirts) that her mother had sent were of the identical pattern that the women of her village had worn from time immemorial. They were black with a few stripes of red and white clouded effects running around the garment at about knee height.

Naw Su felt very self-conscious, as she took one of them out to the bathing place with her one morning before the other girls were up. She poured water over herself, as she squatted with the old *hsay* gathered around her waist. She took a bar of yellow soap that the Mama had given her and rubbed herself clean, after which she slipped the new, fresh garment over her head and allowed it to fall over her, holding it out from her body with

one hand, while with the other she reached down and loosened the knot that held the old *hsay* and let it fall to the ground. Then holding the new *nee* taut to one side of her waist, she pulled it across in front and made a half-hitch to secure it on one side. She gave it a vigorous tug to see if she had made it tight enough. She released it, drew in her breath, made it tighter than before and made another knot. She now hoped it was secure. She had never seen a Karen girl embarrassed by losing her skirt. It seemed queer to have a garment cling so closely to her. She had been entirely unimpeded by the old *hsay*. Now she was learning the restrictions of womanhood.

She drew on the white slip that the school had furnished. There was no such garment known among the village women. Finally, she slipped on the shorter black smock that reached nearly to her knees. She felt very self-conscious in the new costume and scarcely dared to wear it. When the other girls came out to do their morning work, she kept out of sight as much as possible.

They soon saw her, and noting her new clothes, they began to make fun of her. At first that made her more self-conscious and she wished she had not been compelled to make such a sudden change. She stood it for some time without saying anything. She could draw into her shell as quickly as any Karen, but as they went on, it aroused her ire and she taunted the little girls with not knowing what it meant to grow up, and then she told the older ones they knew all about it and could not boast

over her. Her jibes were so sharp and pointed that they were soon glad to drop the matter and go on with their work. By the time they went to the eating house, they had quite forgotten the matter. To the missionaries and teachers the new garments signified that another little Karen girl had grown up.

Miss Jones took occasion to begin to call her "Little Lady," but to the girl the intended compliment became a challenge. There was ever a clash of personality between the two, although it was plain that Miss Jones was trying to win her love. Naw Su was careful, as was the Karen way of hiding things, not to let the Mama know that she did not like her. She was obedient to all orders; she was never disrespectful or outwardly stubborn, but inside there smoldered a dislike that nothing could overcome.

Her thoughts ran something like this:—"Since I am no longer a child, I should do more as I please. I am not going to allow Miss Jones to ride over me any longer. I will be careful not to let her know that I do not love her and that she irritates me, but I will go on in my own Karen way. She cannot make a Westerner out of me."

With this secret resolve in her heart, the girl went about her work out of school hours and in class with a routine quietness that made the foreign lady think that she now had a very obedient girl. This led her to ask her to do special errands for her, much as Miss Maynard had done.

One afternoon after the girls had eaten their evening rice, and Naw Su was returning to the

girls' house, Miss Jones called her and told her she wanted to send Mr. Simms a note about some important orders that had just come to the school from the Department of Education. Naw Su was asked to take the papers over to the house and wait until the missionary had looked them over, and then bring back his reply. It would take him a while to do this, so she was writing him that Naw Su would wait for the papers.

Naw Su took the package and left the other girls with a proud toss of the shining black head to indicate that she was on important business. She felt quite elated to be permitted to go over to the other side of the compound, for that was the boys' side and the girls seldom went there. In fact, they were forbidden, not only by the strict regulations of the school, but by the taboos which the elders had imposed on their young people for generations to prevent the failure of their crops.

Their ancient traditions told them, and the old bard singers had often impressed it on them, both young and old, that if there was any irregularity among the sexes at any age when they were not married, it was most displeasing to the family *bgha*, and all such irregularities were punished by the severest judgments on the people. One of the results would be the drying up of the land. Crops would not mature. The fertility of the soil would be destroyed, and everyone would suffer.

For this reason the elders were ever on the sharp look-out for any approach to irregularity among the young people of the opposite sex. If any un-

seemly relations were observed, or even any approach to friendliness, the people concerned were severely punished.

Often they were stripped naked and driven out of the village. Thereafter they had to build such a hut as they could and live in the jungle in disgrace until the matter wore off and children had come to draw the couple together. Then they were reluctantly allowed to rejoin the village life. Before they could do this, there was the *bgha* to appease. This could be done by killing a tender young pig and dragging its carcass around the village site. Thus by its blood it was believed that it purified the village of the pollution that it had suffered. This was a hard experience for the repentant couple. They had to do it publicly and the remarks that were hurled at them were not the most chaste and kind that could be imagined.

If a little warning that she was trespassing on dangerous male ground came to the girl, it was lost in the exaltation of going to the missionary's house on an important errand. She had always wanted to see the inside of a big house that was used only by one family. Miss Jones called her place home, but it consisted of two rooms at the end of the girls' dormitory.

She entered what seemed to her like an imposing front door and was told to go up the stairs to Mr. Simms' study. She was greatly impressed by a room with books crowding the shelves that covered the walls. Loving every book as she did, she wondered if heaven could be any nicer. She hoped Mr.

Simms would allow her to wait there, so she could stare at the books, or maybe he would allow her to take some of them away with her to read.

He glanced at the package, saw it would take time to look it over and that the note said the girl was to wait, so he designated a bench that was at the foot of the stairs. She was disappointed at first, but she had not had so much freedom in the school before. She sat down and began to look around. She enjoyed seeing the houses and the river from a different angle.

In front of the house there was a small plot of ground that had been fenced off by white pickets. Mrs. Simms was trying to grow a few flowers from the home-land. She saw three of the older school-boys squatting on the ground and lazily pulling the weeds that so quickly choked all of the tender, exotic plants that were being nursed there.

She had heard that these boys had been guilty of climbing out of their dormitory window at night and running to the bazaar and buying tea. They had chaffed under the strict rules of the school and were having their fling. Their absence had been discovered and now they were being punished by having to spend the play hour after eating evening rice pulling weeds in the garden. Their minds were not fully absorbed by their task, however. Any diversion was welcome as a time killer. The sight of pretty Naw Su, as she came down the stairs and took her place on the bench, was a welcome break in the monotony.

It would not be becoming for them to call out to

her and attract her attention. That would be too open and obvious, but there are clever ways that are known to young people all over the world. While each watched her out of the corner of an eye, they ducked their heads and began working vigorously. Soon their bashful grins became snickers, then laughter that grew louder and louder until it could be heard across the drive-way that separated the garden from the house. Naw Su was not looking at them. She was intent on the river a little way beyond, but she, too, had corners to her eyes and suddenly something clicked. It thrilled her to realize that the boys were looking at her while she was wearing the clean new smock and skirt of a lady. She wondered why she was suddenly glad to be wearing grown-up clothes.

The school-boys were really grown men, for many Karens did not have an opportunity to enter school until they were well beyond the age when most boys have finished school in the West. If they had remained in their villages, they might have been married by this time.

Saw Po Ta, the tallest and handsomest of the boys, stood up and stretched himself. He did this with studied indifference and naturalness. He had been squatting for some time and it was quite right for him to find relief by standing up straight and stretching his muscles. He knew the pretty girl was watching him. The other fellows also felt the need of muscular relief, so they all stood together a few minutes. They did not fail to send quick, nervous glances to the upper windows lest the mis-

sionary's vigilant wife should notice their idleness and humiliate them before the girl.

Although there was nothing about Naw Su that would have aroused suspicion, nothing escaped her keen eyes. She fully understood. She had paid little attention to the boys in school. They had not interested her. When she did observe them, she thought they were silly, queer acting creatures. All at once it was different. She was proud that they were performing for her. She liked it, even though she pretended to pay no attention. She was glad that she had brought a big package of papers so that it would take Mr. Simms a long time to go over them. Since it was right after eating rice, she reckoned that the hour that the boys would have to work was just beginning.

The boys pretended to work, the while they made sly remarks just loud enough to reach the alert girl. The boys well understood her studied indifference and it only spurred them on to greater and more open demonstration.

"Eh, Naw Su," came a call from up-stairs. This rudely interrupted the play going on in the garden, and as the girl sprang up to obey the summons, the boys bent to their tasks as if there was nothing in the world but weeds. Naw Su ran up to the office and the missionary handed her the package of papers and smiled as he did so. Though he gave orders with a great show of authority, he was a genial, kindly man and the children all knew that he was fair. He complimented her on her good behavior in school, the improvement in her work, and

told her she was getting to be a fine young lady. She thanked him, but did not tell him of a plan that she had formed in her mind when she had been sent to him. She was going to see if she could not interest him in lending some of his books by telling him of the great purpose in her mind to grow wise and good that she might return to her people and help her village.

The noble purpose, added to the thrill of having the garden show given for her special benefit, made her feel very important as she walked home to the girls' house to return the papers to Miss Jones.

There was a lot of conversation in the boys' dormitory that night. It was all about the pretty girl in the girls' house who had suddenly grown up. What a fine thing it would be to have a chance to see her where the prying eyes of the teachers were not to be feared.

Naw Su was experiencing thrills, too, that she could not understand. Why could she not put the boys out of her mind? She wanted to sleep, but she could not. She tossed around for an hour or more before she was lost in unconsciousness.

CHAPTER XXI

N^{AW SU} was showing a new interest in exercise. She liked to take a group of the smaller girls out for evening walks. These began the day after she was sent to take the package of government letters to Mr. Simms. She could hardly have told why, but she had a newly-awakened interest in the houses along the river front, and in the people who were living in the tiny bamboo huts on the floating rafts. They had come in with loads of bamboo that were cut into strips and split and woven into mats for the sides of houses or into shingles for their roofs.

It did not even occur to her that her first interest in the walks was aroused during the week that she discovered the boys at work in Mrs. Simms' garden. The oldest of them, Saw Po Ta (Child of Iron), was a boy from the hills. His home was quite a distance from Naw Su's, but they were of the same tribal branch and spoke the same dialect. He was tall, and rather dull-looking when his round face was at ease, but when he spoke, he showed unusual animation for a Karen.

His people had been among the first in the hills to accept the new teaching. He had come to school because he was eager to learn, but the teachers

knew he would never make much of a scholar. The other boys, Saw Pa Ha and Saw Ta Paw, were his pals, and the three were usually seen together. They were drawn together by the positive leadership of Saw Po Ta.

To the three boys that were being disciplined by the exacting work in the flower garden, the passing of Naw Su, with her following of four or five little girls, became an event. Anything was a diversion. They even stopped the weed pulling to watch an ox-cart rumble by, or to see any group of people. It all made the work less monotonous. But to see Naw Su come along gave them a thrill. They never openly stared. Saw Po Ta would stand up and stretch. He did not face the road where Naw Su was walking with her charges, but he always managed to cast a sly glance in her direction. She would regard him quite as slyly. The other two boys would eagerly take mental notes of all that was going on. They had a topic of conversation that kept them whispering long after the lights were out. "What black eyes! What shining hair! It was made to wear red hibiscus." Her graceful form reminded them of the orchids that grew in the hills.

They were sorry to have the punishment over, for then they had to make other plans to feed that which had become their most disturbing hunger. Naw Su still wanted to take the little girls out to walk, and as no one could find any fault with her conduct, or with her care of the girls, Miss Jones flattered herself that she was teaching her to be

more thoughtful for others and more refined in her manner. She began to dream that Naw Su was going to be a real help to her, for she could only converse with the Karens through the girl. They were very hard to understand. There was always some matter of discipline. It seemed to her that there was always one or more of the girls out of line. The punishments that she felt called upon to inflict were never successful somehow in curbing their youthful desire for action and for freedom. Now that she was having success with Naw Su she began to flatter herself that she was not such a failure after all.

Three unruly boys had ceased to make trouble for their teachers. They, too, were keeping the rules, and they were getting along very well. They worked every morning, and if the supplying of water took them to the well, they remained there as long as possible. They were careful not to attract attention, for the girls were also carrying water for their house and bathing place. Naw Su thoughtfully came with the younger girls and helped them to pull the bucket up from the deep well and to poise the earthen water jars on their heads in order to carry them. This went on week after week and no one could have suspected the slightest infringement of the rules of conduct. Miss Jones was so pleased with Naw Su that she gave her ever-greater responsibilities, and more and more freedom.

One evening as Miss Jones was trying to teach the girls to sew, that they might take care of their

own clothes, she discovered that the supply of white thread that had been sent out by her friends in America had given out. There was yet a lot of work to be finished and she was lamenting that she could not get on with her task. Naw Su, who was helping her, and interpreting for her as usual, remarked that there was thread in the bazaar, and that the Indian merchants were now selling it more cheaply. Then she ventured to say in a wonderfully subdued manner, "If Mama wishes, I can go to the bazaar and get her a spool of cotton." Miss Jones thought this was a fine chance to get the thread and she was pleased that Naw Su was willing to do it. The shy Karen girls were usually very reluctant to go to the bazaar where so many foreign men were hanging about. She felt that Naw Su was overcoming fear, and that she was becoming more and more thoughtful for her.

She arranged for one of the other girls to go with Naw Su, for even the boldest girl would not go along the city streets alone. It was not because it was unsafe, but idlers about town would make remarks.

The two girls started off on what was to them high adventure. They thoroughly enjoyed the lark although they did not like the remarks that men threw at them along the way. The merchants hoped they had been entrusted with plenty of the school money. Karens were usually easy game because of their natural shyness, their fear of the more aggressive peoples, their dislike of bargaining, and especially because of their ignorance in regard to

the value of money. The seller always planned to cheat them out of half their due.

The girls knew all of this but they were not thinking too much about it as they went along the streets. They were keeping an eye out for the school-boys. Boys had more freedom than the girls and it was not unusual for them to be on the streets around the school compound after they had eaten their evening rice.

The more the boys had talked about the girls, especially about Naw Su, the bolder they had become. She fascinated them because of her unusual beauty of face and form, her striking personality, and her scarcely veiled independence. They had been determined for some time to get into communication with her. They had written her several lurid love letters that they never dared to send, but the writing had given them a great thrill. The letters were carried in the pocket and secretly read and re-read, then they were destroyed because one of the school regulations that the Karen elders and the school authorities had insisted on was that there was to be no exchange of the new kind of communication by letter among the boys and girls. This was one of the most strictly enforced rules by the Karen teachers. They were constantly on guard lest the boys should use their newly acquired ability to write as a means of satisfying their desire to eat the forbidden fruit.

As Naw Su and her friend were walking somewhat expectantly down the street, as luck would have it the three boys had just completed one of

their most flowery literary productions. After carefully folding it into the smallest possible compass, Saw Po Ta stuffed it into his pocket and then they started out as proud as hunters after big game. They walked around the compound, and as they were about to pass the girls' house they saw Naw Su and the other girl coming down the road with no one to chaperon them. A strange shyness suddenly struck the boys and they were tempted to run the other way, but Saw Po Ta pulled himself together and told the boys to follow him and not be foolish like the girls.

The problem was to get the letter from his pocket into the hand of Naw Su. It would not do to stop and talk with her and to be seen handing her anything as small as a note. That would bring their hands into close contact, and it would arouse suspicion. It did not take Saw Po Ta long to make a plan that offered possibilities.

He walked along with a swagger that was sure to attract the attention of the girls. When they were near enough to observe closely, he pulled his hand out of his pocket and dropped the paper. It looked as if it had been done by accident, but it was not lost on the girls. They stifled a giggle, tried to quicken their pace, but when Naw Su came to the note, she dropped the small package of thread as though by accident, and then stooped and picked both of them up together.

It was something that had been in Saw Po Ta's pocket and the very fact that she now held it in her hand gave her a thrill. She quickly tucked it

into the package she was carrying without looking at it. Her companion shared her excitement and they almost ran back to school, but before they had reached there, Naw Su had concealed the exciting thing in her smock, where it would be safe from prying eyes. The boys continued on their way as casually as though they had not seen the girl stoop and pick up the note. They were highly elated, however, and that evening they were as full of giggles in the study as girls. The teacher in charge reprimanded them several times, but could find no cause for their merriment.

Naw Su was burning with curiosity, and lost no time in slipping into the bathing place. To her great joy it was unoccupied, and she knew no one would trespass on her privacy if she dropped the mat that served for a door, so she slipped the note from her *nee* and read:

My sweetest of all turtle doves.

You are like the graceful fawn of the forest. Sleep has left my eyelids since I have been thinking of you. You are my last thought at night and my first in the morning.

You most beautiful of the daughters of women. You are fair and white, and your eyes are like coals of fire that set my heart ablaze. Let the dew from thine eyes fall upon my calladium leaf that I may hold it as a ball of silver in my hand.

I will not be refused.

Him of the Iron Will.

CHAPTER XXII

THE following weeks Naw Su showed an increased interest in all the work of the school, and also in attending the church where the boys and girls shared in the worship. They all enjoyed the singing, for to the Karens, with their passionate love for music, the hymns of the church, which have been the joy and consolation of many generations and races, were still fulfilling a mission. The singing and the good cheer that the music fostered was often the attraction that drew the indifferent non-Christian to the meetings. The emotional thrill that came to them brought them to the realization of a spiritual experience.

Naw Su was always eager to go to the meeting place and did not hesitate to take a prominent seat. This proved to the teachers that she was taking a real interest in the things they were trying to teach and it helped to inspire the leaders, usually the Karen evangelist or a pastor or teacher, to prolong their remarks, when it would have been much more effective if they had said less.

No one noticed that Saw Po Ta was also early at the meetings, that while he sat well back, he kept near the center aisle which separated the boys from the girls. The note that Naw Su had picked

up was still in the fold of her *nee*. She had not dared to leave it anywhere, or to consign it to the waste which was sure to be taken away. She was afraid it would be discovered. The friend who had been with her when it was picked up was sworn to secrecy. She liked to feel that there was some one who might be interested in her. The forbidden note possessed a sort of charm for her. She loved to hold it in her hand and to know that it had been written for her by one who was willing to risk a little danger in getting it to her. It gave her courage and daring to attempt the unusual.

How she longed to talk with him, to learn of his ambitions and to tell him of her own; but there were always the school rules and the admonitions of the teachers and the decision of the village elders that no boys or girls should have anything to do with each other until they had been brought together by the *T'Lo Pgha* (go-between) who was engaged by every careful parent to find a suitable mate for their daughter or son.

On rare occasions a new note was delivered by the boy, but it was difficult to get one over the line between the houses or across the aisle of the church. Sly glances were also rare indulgences, for there were many prying eyes that would see them as readily as the one for whom they were meant.

One could enjoy pleasant thoughts and keep an immobile face and no one would know the difference. That was the only safe thing to do. The weeks went happily on.

One morning while the girls were picking up scraps and raking leaves on the school compound a line of tired, dirty people, wearing the loose smocks of the hills, came along, bearing their cone-shaped baskets on their backs. When they came near to the school, Naw Su recognized the people from her own village. They ambled along under their heavy loads, turning to look to the right and left much as a nervous bird does when it is fearful of some unseen enemy.

They saw the school-house and the large chapel building, and after looking about to see if there was anyone to object, they turned in at the gate. The school-girls, with their neat hair and their clean clothes, looked so different to them that they did not recognize Naw Su, who was working near the path. She had taken that position for a different purpose. Now, as she recognized her uncle among the villagers, she called out with the usual Karen greeting: "Where are you going, Uncle?"

"Going to Basaar."

"Are the village people well?" Naw Su avoided any direct reference to her own family.

"All very well."

They all stood there for several minutes. The visitors showed their self-consciousness by shifting eyes and feet. They seemed to be tongue tied. Naw Su was not tongue tied, but she did not want to show any emotion. She was fully conscious of the difference between herself in her wholesome surroundings and these poor, frightened villagers with their age-long superstitions. The things they

represented had been dropped into the background of her thinking as she had taken on more and more of the ways of the Christian church and school.

The uncle blurted out, "We will be back when the sun is getting low in the west! Your mother says she wants you home soon to teach you how to weave." With that they shifted their loads of wild honey and betel nuts on their curved backs.

They would barter for fish condiment and salt. Their fears of the city and of the Indian merchants made them very poor traders, and they would return with light loads in exchange for the heavy ones that they had carried over the hills.

Naw Su continued with her work, but the movement of the rake was very slow. She had lost all interest and her arms worked with the dull mechanical movement that showed that her mind was not on her work. She dropped her eyes as though she was searching for things to be picked up, but she felt as though the bottom had dropped out of things and life held no more charm for her. All of her hopes were blasted, and she felt that she would like to go out and throw herself into the river.

When the bell rang for the close of the work period and it was time for the girls to get bathed and dressed, Naw Su went to her room and threw herself down on the mat. She did not heed the next ringing of the bell and ate no rice that morning.

When the teacher asked what the matter was, she simply replied, "Headache." That was all that anyone could get out of her. The school bell rang and she responded in a mechanical sort of way,

picking up her books and smoothing out her clothes as though she was walking in a dream. She touched the letter that was pinned to her skirt and flopped to the floor—the Karen gesture of abject despair.

During the chapel service she sat at the end of the seat that was farthest from the central aisle. She did not look up once. Saw Po Ta was near the center and kept watching her as unobtrusively as possible in the vain hope that she might look up for an instant, but he could get no response. Indeed she seemed so indifferent that he began to fear that some other boy was slipping notes to her and that he was being brushed off.

Naw Su learned no lessons that day. She did not answer a single question in class. They saw that she was absent-minded. The girls were surprised that she did not come back at them with the usual quips. Her clever tongue was much admired among them. She either sat and looked at the floor, or went about her work with dull precision.

Miss Jones came to see her in the afternoon, but Naw Su was so rude to her that she went away, saying to herself that she would never learn how to take those queer Karen girls. They were not understandable. As Naw Su did not seem to have any visible illness, she guessed it had something to do with her adolescence and decided to leave her alone unless she needed medical attention.

As Naw Su was lying on the mat, after the other girls had gone to eat rice, she reached under her skirt, and carefully taking out the last note of

Saw Po Ta, she re-read it and then tore it into tiny bits. She was careful to mutilate every character beyond recognition, then she threw it into the place where she knew the trash would soon be removed by the Indian sweepers.

The sun was getting lower and lower. Her villagers would soon return from their day of trading. She dreaded their return, for what could she say to them? Evidently they did not expect her to go back to the hills with them, for to leave now would set her back another year, and after Mr. Simms had fought a way through for her to take a double test, and had thus restored her to the class in which she had begun school.

The message from her mother was most distressing, however. It was not leaving school that disturbed her, since vacation was near, but something else, vague and intangible was looming up in the way, and it seemed as if a new and great hope of final usefulness and happiness was being dashed to the ground.

What did her mother mean by saying that she must teach her weaving? She did not expect to return to the village life. She was learning books.

Mr. Simms, noting her almost reverence for books, had promised to give her some when she finished school. The summons home could mean but one thing. Her parents had planned, as she had always feared, that she was to be betrothed. She was to produce the wedding garment for her prospective husband. She did not want a husband.

CHAPTER XXIII

WHEN Naw Su walked along the street of Tee Wa Village, she had to be told which was her own house. The village had been moved in the meantime. However, there was almost the identical look to the new village that she remembered of the old one. There were the same smells of sooty bamboos, of the pigs and chickens under the house and of the fresh-cooking rice in the pot. The houses looked a bit fresher, for they were not quite so washed out by the rains or burned by the sun. They had, however, the same dirty, unkept appearance and the same old clothes were hanging here and there from bamboos which stuck out from the houses without any sense of orderliness.

The old men had grown more bent, and their faces revealed more of the effects of under-nourishment. They were pathetic appearing creatures as they squatted in the sun to warm their aching bones. The women were going about with monkey-bone or bamboo pipes in their mouths. The dogs greeted her boisterously, almost savagely, but slunk away when she picked up a stick from the ground.

To Naw Su life had been thrilling at the school. She had forgotten the village, but now it struck her

that it had plodded along with its same routine of eating, sleeping, gathering betel nuts and planting and harvesting rice. The days had moved on in colorless succession, only changing as the season's work changed. The same terrors and fears reigned unbroken.

There was little to relieve the dull monotony. There was of course always the recourse to the liquor pot. There the people found temporary forgetfulness of their drab surroundings. But also it brought on the feuds that were tearing the village apart. In a drunken orgy some young buck would challenge another and they would get into an argument. It might end in blows, and then in spite of what the elders could do, the families of the two young men would not speak to each other. In the early days, when there was no government except that of the elders, there might have been bloodshed. Now it usually ended in stupid, strained relationships and resentments that found their outlet in damaging crops or hamstringing a buffalo.

Naw Su found it difficult to fit herself into this routine. The lack of outside interest palled on her. There were no books to read except the Bible and hymn book which she had brought home with her. Once or twice some of the men asked her to come over to one of their houses with her books and read to them.

They listened with the interest that people usually show in a novelty, but with no idea of its having anything to do with them. They liked to hear a Karen read and remarked on the skill of the

white foreigner who had been able to put words into writing and spread them on white paper. They also asked her to sing. This she did, for in the school she had developed a good voice. They laughed at the funny way in which she made her voice go up and down. They compared it with the old *htas*, or poems which the bard singers chanted. They liked the brightness of the tunes, as compared with the mournful chants of the old songs, but soon their deeper interest was attracted by some rumor that a man in the next village had gone by recently and reported that his buffalo had been lost and that he feared that it had been stolen. There was nothing left for Naw Su to do but to wrap up her two precious books in a piece of old cloth and withdraw from the group where she was no longer the center of interest.

One morning her mother got up before daylight and cooked the morning rice. Her father and her younger brother, who by this time had grown to be a tall and well-built young man, went to the fields. Her two older sisters were no longer at home, for they had been married and now lived in a village a few miles over the hills.

As soon as the rice was finished and the droppings from the meal had been brushed through the cracks in the bamboo floor, Naw Su's mother turned to the girl and said, "Now that you are grown to be a woman you must learn how to weave. That is necessary for you to keep yourself and your household in clothes. Take that basket and go over the first ridge to the field and you will find a lot of

cotton there. Gather a basketful and be sure to press it down hard so you can get plenty of the light stuff and bring it home and I will teach you how to weave it and make it into *hsays* and *nees*."

Naw Su did not argue the matter. She did not have the slightest interest in weaving, but she knew that to rebel against her mother at this time would be to bring a whole lot of trouble on herself. It was best to comply. She knew that it would be a good thing to learn to weave, if she could do it without its implying anything special for herself. But what filled her with distress was that she suspected her mother was planning to prepare her for marriage. Her two older sisters had been married. Now it was her turn. Each must follow her turn. She knew that the reason why her mother had insisted that she come home was that both she and her father had made definite plans for her and wanted to see her settled in life before anything happened to make her a poor match or to deprive them of a son-in-law who would add to the earning capacity of her father's house.

The storm that raged over the mountains the day of her birth was a gentle breeze as compared with the storm that was raging in her heart as she, with seeming obedience, took up the basket and slung the cord over her forehead, grabbed her old *dah* and went down the house ladder. Outwardly she was an obedient young woman who had come back to help her mother in her aging years. Her poker face did not show any emotion. She did not

look up. She did not greet any of the other villagers, but that was not unusual. Seldom do the villagers speak as they go along and especially is it good manners for the women to go quietly and keep their eyes on the ground. This suited her mood.

She walked along the village path and down into the valley by the spring from which the villagers got their water. Two of the younger girls were there. They had come for water and were playing about in the overflow. Their brown bodies, divested of clothing, glistened in the early morning sunlight. It had been a long time since Naw Su had seen girls bathe in the open, and especially girls as large as these. It reminded her of her own young and carefree days. It also brought to her mind the strict teachings of Miss Jones, who thought it very improper for girls to take off all their clothes to bathe, even though some of the girls whispered that Miss Jones herself did this in the privacy of her own secure bathroom.

These poor girls in the hills did not know any better. Should she tell them that they were acting improperly? No, for she was in no mood to talk with them. She did not want to get involved in argument as to why they, in the seclusion of their own hills and deep forests, should observe the conventions of the city. She decided that they were not so bad after all and that it would indeed be fun to get away and feel the cool water streaming over her body and, anyway, Miss Jones did not under-

stand the ways of the country. Perhaps when she came back she would have a romp in the stream after all. She would never tell Miss Jones.

Automatically she turned from the spring and followed the path along the hillside. She did not see the plants and flowers along the way. Her mind was in such a turmoil that she did not really know where she was going. She passed by the fork in the paths and was a quarter of a mile along when she happened to notice that she was climbing on to the ridge. The vista before her eyes startled her and made her realize her mistake. She slashed out at the weeds growing along the path and turned to retrace her steps. It was a relief to be alone. She could stamp her feet and grab an offending branch that leaned down over the path and no one would see that she was angry. She could take it out on something without being observed.

Presently she came out into the clearing where the rice was reaped and the cotton plants were left standing with their few bolls of fiber hanging white and glistening in the sunlight. She grabbed a few of these and tossed them over her shoulder, but in her temper she used too much strength and they fell among the weeds, far beyond the basket. Then she had to stop and pick them up, for she knew that with the scant crop every boll was precious. Her father would be sure to see any waste and she would be in for a scolding.

All that morning, for she took the whole morning for the job that ordinarily would have taken but an hour, she was going over in her mind: "I

will not be married and bring a husband home to the house." Then she muttered under her breath, "I am going to teach school. I am going to live in the city where there are a lot of things going on. I can't stand it up here in this wild village with nothing but cooking, planting, weaving and having babies. I don't like the kind of life one must live here. There are so many taboos and the people are so timid. I don't care a dried fish for it all. I now know there are not all the devils they talk about. I hate them. I don't want to be bothered by having a man who will boss me all the time. I want to live like a Christian and I can't do that here in this lonely village. I hate the men up here. They are not like Saw Po Ta. He wears clean clothes and he can read books and he knows about the world. These men here don't know anything. I won't be married. I don't even know whom my mother and father are going to betroth me to. I hate it all. I am going to run away again when the school opens. I will not live here."

While her thoughts raced, she plucked the cotton and threw it over her shoulder and more often than not she had to stoop down and pick it up from among the bushes.

When she had filled the basket and had pressed down the soft fluffy pile and tied it so that she could put a lot more on top of it, she sat down and gazed absent-mindedly over the hillsides. There were ranges and ranges of hills, piling up unevenly as far as the eye could see. There were the patches of clearings where the rice had been

raised. Some had small growth coming up and showed where they had been cultivated a year ago. Others where the rice had just been cleared off were still bare.

She saw the little huts, now in a state of neglect, where the families had lived during the rains to watch their growing crops. They were grayish yellow and half falling down. Some had a drunken slant and the roofs were blown off. She remembered that her mother had said on one of those rare occasions when she had talked with her daughter in a confidential, friendly way that she had been born in such a hut on this very ridge; that year the rotation of sites had brought them there and now again this year they were cultivating the same hillside. Here was where she was born. Here in the rain and the storm she had first seen the light and they had called her Naw Su (Miss Storm). Would that the storm had ceased and that she had had less of it in her life. The pull of the unknown had lured her when it had appalled the rest of the village children. "The customs of our ancestors" had little charm for her.

How long she sat there she could not tell. The distant chatter of monkeys came to her attention. She had been used to the wild life of the jungle and it was no novelty, but when the monkeys suddenly began to emerge from the fringes of forest that surrounded the clearing and to skip among the stubble of the paddy that had been reaped, looking for kernels of the grain that might have been left, she was attracted by them. There was a large

pack. Some were the patriarchs of the tribe, old and gray, but still agile and quick of movement. There were many young and there were several mothers among them. The babies were clinging to the waists of the mothers and held themselves tightly against their bellies. When the mothers jumped down from the trees, the babies still clung tightly and did not seem to mind the drop to the ground. As soon as they reached the ground, however, the half-grown babies released their hold and started searching for grain.

So keen had the monkeys been in their quest for food that they had not noticed the still figure sitting like a statue on the ground among the tall growing stalks of cotton. One of the babies strayed away from its mother, and call as she would, it gave her no heed but kept on searching for rice. Finally it came around a bunch of tall weeds and stood face to face with Naw Su. It gave a cry of surprise and fear and ran back to its mother and jumped onto her breast. Its alarm had aroused the whole pack, and in an instant they were scurrying off at top speed for the nearest tall trees. The suddenness of the flight and their chatter and the noise of their rush for safety took Naw Su so by surprise that she almost involuntarily started to run herself, but she immediately recovered her poise and sat down again when the monkeys had disappeared among the leaves and branches of the trees. She laughed at her own fear and at the fright of the fleeing animals. The expression on the face of the little fellow as he discovered her and turned

and ran with his tail high in the air, the immediate alarm sounded by the mother and taken up by the elders of the pack, their instant scampering for a place of safety, all seemed funny to her. They thought she was a deadly enemy, but she knew she was just another child of the forest and only a few steps removed from them. Why should they fear she would hurt them?

She moved a few yards to a small boulder that stood in the field. From that vantage point she could get a better view of what was going on, if there should be anything around her. What queer creatures monkeys are! How like human beings! How easily alarmed! When we girls used to be out gathering firewood, she thought, how often we ran at something, we did not know what—just like these little animals. The whole village is a pack of monkeys, she concluded, but she must not say it out loud, for the men are very proud of being different from the animals. She wondered if men really were related to them.

Thus her thoughts ran from one thing to another. Here she was up in the wild hills. Was God here? What were her parents going to do to her? Would she have to submit to the life of the tribe? Would she run just as the rest of her Karen tribe had done before the bogies of the forest, and the family demons, and all the things that the folks of the village feared?

The sun was now high over-head. The monkeys were chattering but it sounded only faintly in her ears. It was time she got back to her mother, for

if she stayed away too long it would arouse suspicion and the public opinion of the village was hard to stand up against. She did not want to raise a storm just yet, but there might have to be a storm some day. She was not a monkey to run blindly at the first sight of something strange.

If she was going to run at everything she saw, she would prefer to be a monkey with the freedom of the forest. It seemed to her that Karens had developed only enough brains to add to their fears; they had lost the ability to flee and could only tremble and cower before the unknown. She wished they knew more or less. That was her conception of "a little learning is a dangerous thing."

CHAPTER XXIV

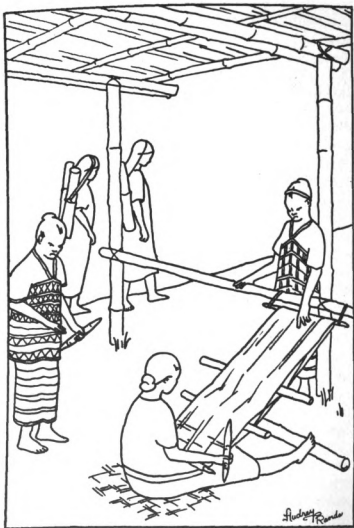
NAW SU was irked by the long days at the loom. It had been rigged up under the house. There she had to sit on a mat hour after hour as she tossed the simple stick of bamboo back and forth. It had been rather interesting to bring in the fluffy cotton and help get it into shape by thrumming the string of the carding bows and to turn the handle of the spinner. Best of all, there had been the relief of getting out into the woods again for she did love the freedom of the jungle. She enjoyed gathering the roots and plants from which the dyes were made. She liked to watch the white yarns turn black or red or blue in the wide pot over the fire. She only wished that she could get more of the bright colors and weave a skirt of her own with the reds, yellows and pinks. She had admired the Burmese skirts that they wore in town. But no, custom required that the Karens weave their skirts of black and follow the somber pattern that had been worn by generations of the patient Karen women of the village.

She also enjoyed staking out the pegs along the side of the house and walking about with the long threads of the warp, stringing them over the pegs to get them into shape to wind on to the round stick

that was a part of the rude loom. There was exercise in doing this. The activity was a relief to her pent-up feelings, but to sit on the ground day after day while she monotonously tossed the shuttle back and forth was like keeping a dove in a cage. She had often seen the doves which the men had brought back alive from some trip. The men would make a cage of neatly smoothed bamboo splints and confine the poor bird in it. They would take it to the jungle and allow it to get hungry so that it would make a call that would attract other wild pigeons, to be caught in the snares which were concealed on the ground where lines of paddy had been strewn.

Naw Su felt that she had been caught in some rude way and wondered how the unfortunate birds felt to see the beckoning trees all around them but not to be able to get away from the cages in which they were confined. Was she to be trapped like one of them?

She was rather interested to see the black cloth grow slowly, cubit by cubit. She liked the few strands of red that ran through the middle of the warp. She only wished they were wider. Every day the old women of the village wandered along and watched her work. They made pointed remarks about the way she threw the shuttles and how taut she held the warp. They ran their hard and stiff fingers along the cloth, noted any bits of uneven weaving, and told her that she did not know much about it yet. She was a mere child. She would have to weave a good many pieces of



cloth before she could do a smooth and even job. She had been off to the city too long. She was not keeping up the traditions of the village whose women prided themselves on their weaving. If she kept at it, she might learn. All these remarks, mostly criticizing her work and making her uncomfortable, were naively passed along from one to another, until she concluded it was the general opinion that she was not much of a weaver and might have to work a long time before she could reach perfection.

Naw Su had been brought up with a respect for her elders that is born into every Oriental heart and is carefully nurtured by those who benefit by its culture. When she returned from the city, however, she had looked upon these old women with a good deal of doubt. They were unkempt and dirty. They were old and bent, and many of them were toothless. Their voices were cracked by scolding. Now, to have them come along and criticize her work, to have them take it for granted that she was coming back into the ordinary village life and become one like themselves, narrow and uneducated, without one single precious book, was very hard to bear. She chafed under the yoke and in her heart made up her mind that she was going to get out and live differently in a wider world.

But now that she was back in the village and it was vacation in the school and the missionaries were probably away from the heat of the plains in some cool, hilly place where they could rest after their year of work, she saw that the only

thing for her to do was to keep quiet and carry on as best she could and not allow any of the sharp retorts that flooded her mind to escape from her lips.

It was all right to learn to weave the long pieces of cloth that were to be worn by women. It would be all right for her to have such a one for herself, and then she would not attract so much attention by appearing in an exotic Burmese *longyi*. She looked for the end of the warp to come in sight and was relieved when the last of the filler was thrown across the loom, the ends of the threads were tied up, and the whole rolled off and doused into the water.

By this time the mother and the other women, who had conspired to keep Naw Su busy, had staked out a lot of long white threads on one lot of pegs and of red ones on another. Every time Naw Su lifted her face from the work in front of her she saw these threads and it stirred up all kinds of rebellion in her heart.

She knew that her mother was going to make her weave yarns that were not for a woman's garment; they meant smocks for a man. She had noticed sly remarks passing from one of the women to another, but as nothing was said openly she could not find any fault with them, although she knew that it forebode trouble for her.

Her father had come home from the field. After rice, when there was no one in the house but Naw Su and her mother, he began to talk about a wild sambur that was wandering around in the forest.

He had wonderful antlers, clean legs and a round body and was altogether a very attractive animal. He hoped that it would not be long before he could build a game trap that would catch him and then he could tame him and keep him in the house. All this talk was long drawn out and there was some hesitancy for words now and again. Once in a while the old man would refer to some lines of the chants of some of the old bards about the beauty of the forest animals who could be taken and made to serve man.

Naw Su had been away from the village so long that she had lost some of the fine points of conversation, but somehow she felt that this talk on her father's part was something that was unusual. He did not often say much, but this time he seemed to have something on his mind and the girl was at a loss to understand what it was all about.

In reply to the father her mother said that it was about time that a fine young male deer should be in the house.

That brought a shudder of fear into Naw Su's breast. The thing they were talking about suddenly dawned on her. It struck her almost into a heap and her heart nearly stopped beating. In a vague way she had known that they were planning for her marriage. Now it had come and her parents' recourse to the old poetic language used by the Karens in every serious situation was to warn her of the decision. As her father was still talking it gave her time to recover her stolid self control, and when the couple turned to her to see what

effect their speeches had made on her, she was as demure and unruffled as if she had not heard a word. Inwardly her heart was a raging storm and her mind was fiercely active in search for some way of escape.

She knew enough of Karen customs to realize that if a girl stoutly refused to accept the young man whom the parents had picked out through their go-between that she was not usually forced to be married against her own wishes. This was not an invariable rule. Some fathers and mothers had been firm enough to insist on their daughters carrying out their wishes, even to the point where unwilling brides had been driven to suicide by hanging—but most often the continued opposition of the girl to the ceremony was enough to make the parents reject the proposed plan and look elsewhere for a mate for their daughter. The marriage was not usually given up but a more acceptable groom was sought.

As no direct appeal had been made to Naw Su, she did not at once make the objection that was firmly fixed in her mind. She thought it best to keep her own counsel and await developments.

The next evening her father came home as usual. After they had finished their rice, they were sitting on the mat, and the wife and Naw Su were putting away the rough wooden tray that held the food. A couple of the villagers, who were relatives of the parents, dropped in and were preparing their betel chews when the father again began talking about the beautiful young sambur which

he reported to have seen in the jungle near-by. As the father extolled his good points, they asked leading questions about him and added their comments concerning the advisability of having him tied up near the house.

All this conversation was evidently to impress Naw Su with the fine attributes of the young man the parents had chosen for her future husband. It was clear that the father had already carried on secret negotiations through the customary go-between and had his plans very well matured for a forthcoming marriage.

Naw Su felt her heart sink. They all seemed sure their plans would go through. A girl might refuse, but it was very unusual. In this case Naw Su realized her parents would insist, for the young man was indeed a catch. He came from a nearby village where there were distant relatives of the family. His father had been able to get together some money and had several buffaloes and oxen and drove them over the hills to carry betel nuts down to the edge of the mountains where he sold them to the Burmans. The young man was good looking, strong, and a steady workman, and, according to the Karen judgment, all that a bridegroom should be.

This was wasted on Naw Su. She did not want to marry. She wanted to return to school. She did not want to remain in the hills. She hated the narrow village life, so full of fears and hates and petty jealousies. She wanted to read books and see the world that had expanded in her imagina-

tion and knowledge ever since she had gone to the big city.

A few nights later when her mother began talking to her Naw Su let out her long pent-up emotion. She told her mother that she had no skill to catch a young male sambur, that she did not like wild meat, that she had no taste for hunting, that she liked books and that she wanted to see the world. Then she gave the pill a little sugar coating by adding that for the present she was not going hunting but that she would see what happened after a while. Then she rolled herself up in her blanket and pretended to be asleep.

The bombshell blasted the plans of the parents. They knew that she was a *storm* and they thought it better to avoid unpleasant scenes just then. They decided to drop the matter for a while, but only for a while, for to have a daughter grow up to maturity without being married was unthinkable. She would come to her senses when she saw that she was the only village girl of her age left without a home and without babies tugging at her breasts.

CHAPTER XXV

NAW SU'S parents were puzzled to know what to do. Here was a mere slip of a girl defying their authority, and more than that, ancestral custom. It had been handed down from father to son for as many generations as anyone knew about that the parents should arrange for the proper marriage of their children. Now this stormy chit of a girl was upsetting all their plans. She would not hear of marriage. They consoled themselves that other girls in this generation and even in past times had kicked over the traces once in a while, but usually they were brought around and meekly submitted to their fate and became the shy and uncomfortable centers of attraction at a wedding feast, on which occasions the young men got jolly with liquors and noisily taunted every unmarried girl in the village.

As a last resort, the parents of the girl sent for the young man to come and show himself to the reluctant female. They counted on his good looks, as well as his high standing in the estimation of all who knew him, to tip the scales in his favor. Of course they said nothing to Naw Su about his intended visit. The coming of three men up the steps of the house ladder one evening seemed to be a

very casual affair. They explained that they were passing through the village and had just dropped in for a call. Their host pushed the betel box across the mat for them to partake of its unusually well-stocked contents.

Naw Su was squatting on a mat by the fireplace untangling some yarn for her weaving. When the men appeared, she gathered up the mass of cotton and carried it to the inner room, but as the walls were thin there was nothing for her to do but to listen to the conversation around the fireplace in the next room. Her father called to her to bring more fuel to set off the fire and make it light up the house. Obediently, but very shyly, she took a bundle of dried sticks that was standing against the wall, and untying the bamboo withes that held it together she carried four or five sticks out and laid them down by the side of the fire for her father to put into the flames. Then she quickly withdrew, but not before she had stolen a sly glance at the suitors. She knew the older men, for she had often seen them when they came to talk with her father, but the younger man was a stranger. She noted his fresh striped smock, the orchid stuck in the pierced lobe of his ear, the gay bag that he carried at his side and the string of green beetle wings that encircled his head. It was well known that in the village over the hills young men going out in search of love wore those brilliant, shiny wing-covers as a sort of circlet around their well-oiled black hair.

In desperation she hung her head and slipped

out of the way as quickly as possible, hoping that she had not been noticed. She did not realize that her very shyness was taken for the coyness that always touches the heart of a young man. The conversation went on about buffaloes and wild deer and crops and all kinds of things; but Naw Su tried to stuff her ears as she lay on her mat in the next room feigning sleep. It was nearly midnight when the party left the house. They had had a few drinks of the rice liquor that Naw Su's father had provided to grace the occasion and they were a jolly company indeed, thinking that of course they had advanced the cause of the young man by their tactful maneuver.

Nothing was said about the visit. The next morning Naw Su's father went off to his fields and the mother was busy about the arrangement of the yarns for weaving and in untangling the warp which Naw Su had left unfinished the night before. The day went on more quietly than usual. Little was said by either the mother or daughter. It was diplomatic to avoid the subject of the young man and his visit of the night before; but the parents were counting on events taking a new and swifter course.

About a week later, when the family had rolled into their blankets and settled down for the night, they heard the strumming of a bamboo Jewsharp. The soft, weird notes were not strong enough to carry far, but they were near enough to be heard through the loosely woven bamboo matting of the house. The father and mother sat as if they

heard nothing. The music was not for their ears. The notes were expected to carry only just far enough for Naw Su to hear.

For some reason the notes did not thrill her. They struck terror to her heart instead. No matter how they moved up and down the five-pointed Karen scale and no matter how plaintive the minor notes, they had no love lure for Naw Su. She rolled herself in her blanket and seemed to be oblivious in sleep. In reality her heart was thumping with rebellion and her mind was active trying to find a way of escape.

It seemed a long time before the love-lorn boy was willing to stop. The previous visit had filled him with deepest longing to have such a coy and attractive young woman for his mate. He could not get her out of his mind. Tune after tune of the old *Htas* (bard poems) of the Karens followed one another in slow and well-modulated succession.

He had expected no outward response to his playing. Etiquette demanded that young women remain aloof and show no emotion to such a serenade. However, the boy remained close enough to the house to hear any creaking of the matting if perchance the girl had been so moved as to try to slip down the side of the house and enjoy a quiet meeting under the cover of darkness. He waited in vain, and finally, sticking his bamboo Jews-harp into his bag, slowly strolled off in the half light of the waning moon.

Nothing that the anxious parents did the next

day betrayed their curiosity to know what had been the effect of the night's serenade. Naw Su went about her tasks with the same stolid face and performed her dull routine with studied exactness. She was going to do nothing to excite comment one way or the other. She found excuses to go to the spring and draw water several times and once took a good deal of time to bathe and wash her clothes. The women who came along and saw her could not accuse her of doing anything unusual, for by this time they were quite accustomed to her frequent bathings and washings and had become tired of poking fun at her for her new habits of cleanliness.

Naw Su quietly watched the women in the afternoon, and when they were all busy about other things, she went to the spring again and gathered up clothes which had been left to dry on branches. She made a bit of a show of bringing her garments back to the house, but what the women did not see was that it was only a garment or two that she brought up that afternoon. The rest had been carefully hidden in the jungle near the spring. The serenade had had the opposite effect from what it was intended, for the face that it brought before her mind's eye was that of Saw Po Ta.

The season was getting well advanced. The men had cut their trees on the plots of land that had given good omens and promised good crops for the coming year. The heat had dried the fallen timber and the brush. The time for the burning

was coming near. They were discussing plans for moving to the little huts they would build as soon as the fire had done its work and the rains came to soften up the hard soil and bring the planting time.

Naw Su saw that her parents were planning for her to remain with them in the village. Nothing was said about school except that her father often spoke of her great learning and thought that she had about finished all that one needed to know. Her stay at the school had not made her more efficient with weaving or chopping trees or cooking rice, and he did not see any need of allowing her to carry on with that nonsense, thus postponing the great desire of his heart to see her married and settled.

The men were all very busy and few strangers passed through the village. It seemed to the parents of Naw Su that things were working out according to their plans and that Naw Su would remain and obey their wishes. But Naw Su had different ideas, and she confided with no one. As her parents' determination became more evident, her own opposition stiffened. There were many ways to accomplish her purpose. She was no longer a little girl, afraid of all the village taboos. She had a mind of her own and was going to carry out her own purposes. She knew that it was nearly time for school to open and she was going to be there.

One morning, when the first creakings of the bamboo floors told her that the women had gotten

up to cook rice for their men before they started out to their clearings, Naw Su carefully unrolled herself from her blanket, slipped into the clean skirt that she had brought from the spring the day before and took three or four bamboo water joints from the corner of the house. No one had noticed that a few days before she had brought some long bamboos from the jungle and had stood them up so that they leaned against the side of the house near her sleeping place. Neither had they observed her the night before when she had quietly pushed aside the upright bamboo slats of the matting that formed the house wall.

Everyone was quiet except her mother who was blowing the fire in the fireplace to get coals left over from the night before to glow and blaze. Her father and brother were still noisily sleeping.

It was only a minute's work for her to crawl to the opening in the side of the house, grasp the bamboo which conveniently stuck up through the opening, and slide to the ground. No one heard.

By the time the sun was up she was miles away to the west. That night she rested in a village where several of the children were going to school. The next day the group of them began their long trek to the city.

As they dropped down over the ridge and were passing through a low, damp valley, Naw Su was caught by a sudden sneeze. At first she did not think much of the incident, but a second later she remembered that her father would never have continued on a journey, no matter how important

it might be, if he had sneezed as he was starting out. This taboo was one that the whole tribe of Karens considered most deadly, and rarely was a man brave enough to keep on his way if he was overtaken by a sneeze. Naw Su stopped. Should she turn back? She almost shook with fear. She stood long in the path and hesitated between obeying the age-long custom of her forefathers or bravely defying the ancestral fears in order to go on with her plan to win a new freedom of the spirit as well as of the body.

Another instant her face became firm. Even if all the devils of the mountains were against her she *would* go on. What were all the taboos against her new found freedom, her books, and her Christian faith? She went on steadily and rapidly and never looked behind.

As the children hastened over another rise of low-rounded hills, she heard noises in the deep jungle that covered the part of the country where the water was plentiful. This made her stop and listen. As she stood there with intent ears, she began to hear the cracking of branches and the popping of bamboos breaking. There was only one thing that could produce such noises, the wild elephants that roamed the hills! She was now to encounter the living enemy that the Karens feared most. Elephant herds, composed of as many as twenty or more great beasts, feared nothing. The Karens did not mind the tigers that they often met, for tigers seldom attacked human beings, but elephants were different. Their small eyes did not

give them much sight and they depended mostly on their keen sense of smell for warning of the approach of enemies. They had an antipathy for men, and when they smelled human beings in the jungle, they would blindly charge against the source of the odor that had aroused them and trample the forest and their victim beneath their enormous feet.

When the children heard the animals feeding through the jungle along the path which they must follow, they were struck dumb with terror. Here was something more tangible than *nats*. It was not much use to try to hide on the ground, for the elephants would scent them out. If they climbed a small tree, the beasts would uproot it and knock them out and trample them to death.

For a brief moment Naw Su wished she were home in her village. As she stood trying to think what to do, the noise of the animals came nearer and she knew that they were coming toward them. She was in a panic. Too frightened to pray, too nearly paralyzed to run, she felt certain their end had come and she felt terribly responsible for the children that were following her.

Suddenly she spied a great, wild mango tree near-by, and she fled to this. Jumping up, she caught hold of a creeper that clung about it, pulled herself up and found a convenient seat in a crotch of one of its giant branches some fifteen cubits above the ground. Here she felt they could be secure. The tree was too big to be shaken by the great beasts and she was so high that they could

not reach her with their trunks. Now she urged the others to follow suit and like a lot of young monkeys they scrambled to a place of safety.

No sooner were they well perched than they were frozen in terror by the screeching trumpet of one of the young bulls in the herd. Other animals took up the cry and general pandemonium broke loose, as one after another of the huge hulks surged through the thick forest, and regardless of small trees, bamboos and bushes, plowed a way forward. They seemed to rock the whole mountain-side in their rush. It was only a few minutes before they had passed by, leaving the children untouched. Then all was still again. Not even a monkey chattered. The very stillness, too, had its terrors, and it took Naw Su some time to quiet her nerves. She could hardly get down from the tree that had been so easy to climb in her fright, so shaky was she. She hoped nothing else would occur to hinder their getting back to school where they would be free from taboos and elephants. One would have thought that the elephants were still after the children, so rapidly did they push on to the next village where they could find a friendly bamboo roof to shelter them.

When Naw Su walked into the school compound the evening of the following day, there was nothing about her appearance or manner that would indicate that she had been through any unusual experience, or that this was going to be the most eventful year of her already stormy career. Miss Jones welcomed her. Naw Su had no money with

which to pay school fees and buy books and so Miss Jones gravely said that she would take care of these things for her. Sometimes she almost wished that Naw Su had kept her troublesome person away from the school and had remained an ordinary, docile Karen girl in her village. She did not realize that the docile ones rarely make a name for themselves, either in school or in life at large.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE harsh New England, school-marm voice of Miss Jones rasped from the back veranda of her house, "Why don't you girls get busy and keep those weeds down? Get to work! Work fast! The weeds are getting bigger and bigger every day, and the first thing you know there will be a cobra hiding among them. Hurry up, the work hour is almost over and you have not yet cleared three yards."

"But, Mama, the rains are very heavy and the plants all grow very fast," replied the soft Karen voice of Naw Su, who was now taking more and more charge of the girls and supervising their work hour.

"Now don't blame your laziness on the rains. If you only worked harder, you would get the whole walk cleared. Don't stand there and talk back to me." With this parting injunction Miss Jones withdrew into the seclusion of her room.

"Mama seems to be pretty bad this morning," said one of the older girls near Naw Su. She spoke in a half-whisper and glanced up to the veranda to be sure that she would not be overheard, for somehow the Mama's ears seemed to be very sensitive to things that one did not want her to hear.

"Yes, she is pretty hard to get along with," said Naw Su. "I wonder what is the matter. She does not seem to be having a very good time. Almost every time I speak to her she gets angry and so I have to leave her alone as much as I can. Of course she is our teacher and she has come all the way from America, somewhere beyond the setting sun, to teach us, and so she must think that we are pretty bad if she has to scold us all the time. But I guess she does not understand us very well." Naw Su was finding it hard to say what she wanted to say. She felt a loyalty to her school and all that it had brought to her, but still she could not help feeling that Miss Jones did not quite fit into the picture.

"They say that the white foreigners don't like the rains. Is not that queer?"

"I like the rains, for we can have so much fun. But Miss Jones gets mad so easily. I wish she would let us take off our clothes and go out and play tag in the rain as we used to do at home," sighed a girl.

"I like to hear the rain pounding down on the tin roof," said another as she was tugging at the weeds. "It reminds me of the river that flows by our village. When the rains come hard, this river makes a big noise and I like to hear it. I wonder if it was the *nats* shouting as the old folks in the village said it was. Whether it is the *nats* or not I like it."

"I just love to hunt frogs in the rain. To put a little lamp in an oil tin with one side cut out and take a good strong stick and paddle around in the wet and get a few frogs to roast for breakfast. That

surely is fun, and they are good to eat, but Miss Jones says it is not polite for girls to do such things. Mr. Simms lets the boys go out, but even they have to get in when the nine o'clock bell rings. Boys are allowed to stay out as late as they please at home."

"I should think Miss Jones would let us kill the frogs, for she says they keep her awake nights with their croaking. She despises them. One morning she was especially angry and she told me to go and catch all the frogs—she was so funny. She said catch them, but not to kill them, but to carry them way off and let them go again. But not to let them come back to the school where they would keep her awake! These foreigners surely are funny!"

"She does not want us to fish," chimed in still another girl. "She says it is bad. I don't know why. Women always sit along the side of the road and get all the fish they want. Now the rains have been coming very hard and there is lots of water in the ditches on the roadside. Why, Mama even complained about those leather shoes she wears and says they cost a lot of money and will be ruined since it spoils them to get wet. Why doesn't she wear wooden clogs? They get dry in a few minutes.

"I wonder what she wants us to do here in the yard," she continued. "Yesterday I pulled up that red ball of, what is it they call it, 'amaryllis,' or something like that? You know, that red thing. She was awful mad. She said that it was a pretty flower and she wanted it to grow, but I must pull up the other things that she said were not pretty. It is hard to know just what to do."

"She says that the rains make her sick," added another. "She says she feels wet all the time. I should think she would with that tight-fitting dress and those long skirts and the many white skirts that she wears underneath. She complains to me about the men who come down on the rafts that bring the bamboos and the timber from the hills. You know, they have to bind a lot of bamboos to the big timber rafts so the logs will not drop to the bottom of the river. They tie up near the front of the school. She tells us that we must not go near the river when the rafts are there, for she says the men will hurt us."

"I like to watch the rafts, but I always used to keep away from the Burmans. Now that Miss Jones talks so much about it, sometime, just to be mean, I would like to walk out and sit on a raft and see if the Burmans are as bad as she thinks," piped up one of the smaller girls.

"You keep quiet," retorted Naw Su, in imitation of Miss Jones' manner. She was a little sorry for the white woman. "I don't suppose they have rains in America and so Mama does not know what they are like. We enjoy the sound of the rain on the roofs, the rushing of the water, the fun of wading and swimming, and catching frogs and fish. We like to see the buffaloes wallowing through the mud as they plow here on the plains. There is always plenty of fish and prawns to eat. Mama thinks only of noises and her nerves, and maybe she can't help it. This is all new to her."

"Strange is it not?" said a little girl.

"Yes," Naw Su replied. "I guess she did not

sleep much last night, for she called to me as if she was being hurt, and when I went to her room, there was a cloud of white ants playing around her light. She had crawled under her mosquito net and was crying that she did not know what to do. The white ants were swarming out of a hole in the ground and they all flew to her bright lamp. Then, when they hit the lamp, their wings dropped off and the ants fell on the table and were running all about. She was as frightened as if there had been a whole family of tigers in the room. She ordered me to put out the light. Then she said to sweep up the wings and ants, and of course I could not see them in the dark. Then she got mad and said that this miserable country would be the death of her. I saw she was really scared and yet I wanted to laugh, but I did not dare to. I was afraid she would hear me. When I went to the dormitory, I threw myself on my mat and I laughed till I almost shook the whole house. I was afraid I would waken up the rest of you." Then she added: "I wish Mama was not like that. She knows so much, and she is paying my bills in school. I guess she has troubles of her own. I wish the bell would ring."

Saw Po Ta had come to the well to bathe and draw water to refill the jars that sat along the veranda of the boys' house. There must always be a supply of drinking water, even in the rainy season. He was making the most of a possible opportunity to see Naw Su. He allowed the water to drip out of the flat tin bucket, which he drew up from the bottom of the well with the coconut rope, so that it

would take him twice as long. He hoped Naw Su would be along with the girls and then he could deliver the flowery note which he had so carefully written. All the vacation season he had slyly taken his Bible down and read it. No one asked him what he was doing. They took it for granted that he was getting pious and some of the women had made fun of him. They would have had still greater fun if they had known that he was assiduously studying the Songs of Solomon. In them he found extravagant phrases that satisfied his love-sick taste for literary expression.

This morning, although he managed to kill as much time as possible at the well, Naw Su did not appear, and rather crestfallen, he went to his meal and ate with little enthusiasm.

Naw Su's vacation had been a far different thing. She had spent her time in warding off all efforts of her parents to marry her. She had come to feel that boys were a real nuisance and she wanted to have nothing to do with them. The more her parents tried, the harder she had fought until she was now certain that she had fully made up her mind not to marry. She knew that in the Karen village there was no place for an old maid, that widows had a hard time, but nevertheless she wanted nothing to do with the men who would hinder her from going on with her books.

On her return to school Saw Po Ta had slyly smiled at her in class. She had immediately dropped her long eyelashes, resolved not to be disturbed. It was a long time before she would look

up, and then not in the boy's direction. He tried to meet her on the street, but she was always surrounded by other girls and she would not pay any attention to him. When she had to go to the well, she always peeked out to see if Saw Po Ta was anywhere in sight, for she thought she wanted to keep away from him if possible. All this only made her the more desirable to him and he was determined to attract her attention.

Naw Su was not the only one who watched the well. Saw Po Ta did his own scouting, too. He had tried it many times. He knew when Naw Su would come with the girls, but she seemed always to get away before he could contrive to meet her there. One morning Miss Jones had sent her to get an extra supply of water for her medicine room. The other girls had all gone, and the expectant eyes of the young man were on their job. He grabbed a half empty water jar from the line on the veranda and, pretending that the water was fouled, made a great show of washing the jar and then rushing to the well to refill it.

Naw Su's hands became unsteady. She spilled half the water from the bucket as it bumped from one side of the well to the other. All her efforts to get away seemed to be thwarted, and her temper, usually under such good control, flared up and she looked at Saw Po Ta as if she would like to throw him into the well to be rid of the nuisance of his presence. The water bucket hit against the bricks as she tossed it down the well again. Saw Po Ta did not offer to help her. That would not be the Orien-

tal way to win her attention. He just stood and looked at her. That frustrated her still more, and she pulled up the bucket again, spilling half its contents in its jerky ascent. Finally she poured some water into her jar and lifted it to her head. She was sure she hated the boy and was greatly disturbed by his attentions, yet there was something fascinating about him. He was so steady and so calm as he stood there politely waiting for a glance. She was flattered to know it thrilled him just to be alone with her at the well.

She spilled water from the jar, and it trickled down the front of her jacket, leaving a wet line where the cloth stuck to her skin. Her anger was aroused again, but there was his steady gaze on her, and his black eyes were shining like two balls of fire. They burned their way to her heart, and in spite of herself she enjoyed the sensation. She became hysterical and laughed.

There was a white roll about the size of a cigarette hanging from the lobe of his ear. That morning he had picked an orchid, which he had seen growing on a tree near the boys' dormitory. He had carefully written a note and had rolled it up with the orchid. He gave his head a shake and the paper fell to the ground.

The sight of this paper made Naw Su want to hit the boy with her waterbucket. Then her emotion changed quicker than one could imagine to one of feminine curiosity. In obedience to this changing mood she reached out her hand to catch the paper. Her first instinct in doing so was to get something

on the boy. When she had once clutched it in her fingers, she felt that she must keep it, hardly realizing that she was playing into his hands. She quickly tucked it under the fold of her skirt, and then grabbing up the water jar, poising it on her shapely head, she marched away with an air of triumph.

Miss Jones was waiting for the water, for she wanted it to wash the leg of a little girl who had scratched her mosquito bites until they were running sores. She had not slept much the night before. The hot, steaming atmosphere and the buzzing of a big beetle that had gotten into her room and was noisily bumping first against the window and then against the bed-post, and falling down among the toilet articles in its vain efforts to find the open air, had given her another very poor night. Now she could hardly hold herself steady, and it seemed to her in her tense impatience that Naw Su had taken twice as much time getting the water as she should have. When the girl lifted her arms to lower the jar from her head to the rack on which it was to rest, the neat roll of white paper dropped to the floor right in front of the distraught lady. Miss Jones' strained nerves were ready to jump at anything, and mistaking it for a cigarette, she grabbed it up before Naw Su could free her arms.

"What, Naw Su, are you secretly smoking cigarettes?" yelled Miss Jones. "You naughty girl, while I have been sacrificing to keep you in school you have been deceiving me like this. Can't I trust

one of you? Are you all doing things behind my back?"

Then as she felt the paper in her hands she realized that it was not a cigarette, but still her mind was so taken up with thinking that she had been deceived that she continued to scold: "You girls are always doing things of which I do not approve. What is this paper you are hiding in you skirt? Do you do these things just to make me trouble?" To the woman it seemed as if the whole place and everyone in it were against her. Whether it was the climate or the unruly children, she could hardly tell.

Naw Su had quickly recovered the poise that she had almost lost when she found herself accused of smoking. She realized that the paper, while it was not a hated cigarette, was liable to get her into even hotter water than mere smoking would have done. The worst possible thing was for that paper to fall into Miss Jones' hands, for she who had been denied the attention of young men was especially incensed that young men should write to girls in her charge. Was it jealousy or was it some kind of secret hate that Miss Jones had developed? She could never have told herself and would have denied the truth if anyone had accused her. When Naw Su tried to get the paper back, her curiosity was further aroused and she held it firmly in the grasp of her angular fingers.

"Naw Su, what have you been doing? Why have you deceived me? Have I not been good to you, and is this the way you reward me?"

"I have not deceived you, Mama." Naw Su's chagrin at being caught in such an awkward situation was beginning to give way to anger at being unjustly accused.

"Yes, you have," retorted the impatient teacher. "You have been doing things I have not known about. You have been talking to the girls about me. You have been getting letters from the boys. You are not fit to be in this school. I can't trust you any longer. You go to the well, and you keep me waiting a long time." Then giving way to her feelings, the result of her sleepless nights, she screamed at the unoffending girl. "Get to your room and don't let me see you again."

Her hands were trembling while she tried to bathe the sores on the little girl's leg. The whole room was tense and the patient began to cry. That again brought all the worst out in the tired missionary, and she scolded the youngster till she ended in hysterical sobs, and all the other girls in true Karen fashion ran quickly out of the way.

All this had been so sudden that Naw Su was utterly bewildered. It seemed as if all that she had built up had tumbled down around her ears. There was nothing to do but to slink away to her mat. There she was tempted to give way to sobs, but she was too angry to cry. She sat there in a dazed condition. The breakfast bell rang, and she did not hear it. The girls came back from their rice, changed their *longyis* and put on clean jackets, for they all felt that the air was electric with tensions that they could not understand but could feel.

Therefore they must be careful to avoid anything that might precipitate a storm.

The school bell rang and still Naw Su sat there as unmoved as the stone image of Buddha to which the Burmese people were all going in festive dress on their full-moon day. Miss Jones missed her at the opening exercises and came into the dormitory to see what was the matter with her undisciplined pupil.

"Why did you not go up to school this morning?" asked the Mama in her most consciously sweet tones.

No reply. Then, "Naw Su, why do you not answer me? Do you not know all I have done for you? Why are you so ungrateful?"

The more questions she asked the more Naw Su looked like the dumb Buddha. Miss Jones straightened herself for action and began: "Naw Su, do you not know that it is against the school rules to receive love letters? You should have nothing to do with the boys."

Still there was no visible response from the Karen girl who squatted on the mat. She was outwardly stolid and calm but inwardly boiling with anger at being accused of something she had not done and had had no intention of doing. Why had she been so foolish as to pick up that bit of paper? How she hated Saw Po Ta for all his attentions, but could she make that clear to suspicious Mama, who could not even understand the Karen language? How could she be expected to understand the Karen heart. To Naw Su Miss Jones was begin-

ning to be regarded as a dried up old woman who did not understand the climate of Burma nor the girls whom she had come to save. It was better to keep still and take her punishment than to try to explain to those whose minds would accept nothing but their own prejudices and snap judgments.

Miss Jones had the feeling that her star pupil had gone completely bad on her hands. "What had she, who had come all the way from America to save these poor souls, done to merit such ungrateful treatment?"

Just then a sudden gust of monsoon wind came swirling across the compound and great drops began to blow against the tin roof and made conversation impossible, even if one had been inclined to talk. Both the woman and the girl felt that it was an excuse for getting away and saving their faces. Miss Jones went back to her room and was drenched from head to foot in going the few yards from the girls' house to her own.

There was no alternative but to change every stitch of clothing—a most distasteful proceeding to have to take off all one's clothes in the middle of the forenoon and to find only damp and moldy garments in her wardrobe to put on.

"Everything is against me," bemoaned the lady. "I have come out here to do these people good, and they do not appreciate me. These girls seem to balk me at every turn and I abominate this terrible climate. It is always wet weather and the constant rain is ever pounding on the roofs. I wish the sun would come out. If I could see it shine for even a

minute, I think I would feel better. What will I do with Naw Su? She has turned so stubborn this term. I wonder if she is really a Christian. Was she enticed back to her heathen ways while she was home? I wonder what is the matter with her?" And so she continued, blaming Naw Su, the weather, and everything but herself for her plight.

Meanwhile, in the girls' room, Naw Su sat on her mat. She too was asking questions of herself and not getting any good answers. "Mama is my teacher. She knows everything. She talks a lot about worshipping God, but—well—I wonder if she knows Christ." There was something wrong somewhere. Yes. She was wrong. She was wrong to pick up that note and to let Miss Jones see it. She would probably be expelled from her beloved school and be deprived of all the books she wanted to read. Was Miss Jones right? Was she a Christian? Really a Christian? Think as hard as she could, she could not make Miss Jones seem like the Christ that the preacher talked about in the chapel.

CHAPTER XXVII

NAW SU was seated on the mat on the floor, and Mr. Simms sat behind his desk. Miss Jones stood beside him like a tiger waiting to spring on its prey. She was not long in opening fire.

"This girl has been positively impudent. She sits and will not answer questions. She has been receiving love letters from the boys. She will not obey me, and I can do nothing with her. She needs more discipline than I can give her. You are the superintendent of the school, and I insist that you give her the proper punishment."

"Sit down, Mama," said Mr. Simms, using the term of respect to soothe her nervous tenseness.

"Did you sleep well last night?" His face broke into a kindly smile as he spoke.

"I don't see what that has to do with this girl's impudence," she replied, choking at the words. "I tell you, Naw Su has been disobedient, and I will not stand for it, and if you are any kind of a superintendent for this school, I don't think you will either."

Naw Su dropped her head lower and lower as she tried to hide her shame at being accused of being impudent and disobedient. These were the last

things she had intended to be, and she could not understand how Miss Jones could say such things of her. What was the matter anyhow? Was Miss Jones right? Or, was it possible that she herself did not understand. She (Naw Su) had not intended to do anything that would cause kind Mr. Simms more trouble.

"You know, Mama," said he, still sparring for time, "we are having a terribly bad spell of weather. The clouds seem to have turned inside out and to have dropped all their water on our compound. I never saw the insects so bad. The wet and mold have crept into every crevice. Just this morning I could wring water out of the shirt that I forgot to hang in the almirah last night. We are all tired out. I do not wonder it has gotten on your nerves. Suppose you leave Naw Su with me for a while and you go in and ask Mrs. Simms what she wants to borrow from you for the dinner we are giving the Commissioner and his lady this evening. I know she will need some of your silver and perhaps a few dishes. We have to meet our social obligations. They are a good sort. The Commissioner is a kindly fellow but still can't seem to forget that he is a high official. Mrs. Simms is really anxious to give them a good time, so will you please take a few minutes to help her."

While talking, he had risen and opened the door. When Miss Jones had passed through and he had closed it with just a little bang, he turned to the girl. She was encouraged to tell her side of the story, and he said in his kindest tone, "Naw Su, I

believe you have told me the truth. You may have to learn to avoid the appearance of evil, but I don't believe you have intended any wrong. We must remember that Miss Jones is not very well, and when one's nerves are overwrought, they may do queer things. That is not the real self. You will feel better if you go and take a bath and then go to your classes and forget and forgive. Be careful that you have nothing to do with any more love letters. God bless you. You may go."

The Commissioner's dinner passed off with the usual formalities. The great man had brought two servants dressed in their long white coats which were held in at the waist with their red commerbunds. They looked with ill-concealed disdain on the one servant of the "missionary-sahib" and his short coat. But they were quietly respectful around the table and moved noiselessly on their bare feet. Miss Jones had sat through the long meal and the longer evening, trying now and again to be interested in the conversation. It mostly turned on the subject of the "natives" and how hard it was to understand them and the queer things they did as they were emerging from their isolation into new ways of living. Mr. Simms said he had found them responsive and eager to do right, but the Commissioner alternated between calling them "stupid" and "jolly-funny." Miss Jones was inclined to agree with the Commissioner, but Mr. Simms insisted that the natives were worth trying to understand.

"Your mission seems to be doing pretty well, is it not, padre?" asked the Commissioner.

"Yes, many villages are turning to the teachers and they are baptizing large numbers. In a few villages almost everyone has turned to the light," replied Mr. Simms.

"How many have you in the school?"

"We have now about sixty boys and we have eighteen girls. We feel that we are making real progress."

"That's good. I have just been on tour in some of the nearby villages and I heard that they were turning to Christianity. I do not mind, but . . . well . . . if you can also develop a higher standard of living as well as a greater number of converts I shall indeed be glad. You know—please pardon me, padre—but I sometimes wonder if both yourselves and the Roman Catholic mission do not think too much about numbers and fall down a bit on the quality of life you should be building up."

Both the missionaries were rather taken aback by the plain-spoken Englishman.

When the guests had gotten into their carriage, where their Indian Syce (coachman) had been waiting for them all the evening, and rode away, Miss Jones turned to Mr. Simms and said, "You see, Mr. Todd, the Commissioner, does not trust the people as you do. He agrees with me that they will overrun the country with their native ways and if they are too forward they should be punished, and—"

"Miss Jones," replied Mr. Simms, interrupting her before she could get well wound up, "it is too late tonight to discuss these matters. We need sleep

and let's get to bed. It has been a hard day for my good wife. We will talk about this in the morning. Come over when you have a few minutes. I shall be glad to see you."

This last sentence was in earnest. He wanted to try to make a real peace between her and the misunderstood Karen girl.

Miss Jones arrived the next morning, just as Mr. Simms was getting into his office. He yawned as he sat down in his chair, but he had no chance to yawn after Miss Jones got started. They talked for nearly two hours. She was in tears and sobbed out, "I did so want to help these poor people. I thought God wanted me to come to Burma. I thought the Karens would want to be taught. But I can't learn their terrible language with its strange tones. I get all mixed up with it. I do not understand their sullen ways. I guess my nerves are all worn out. What shall I do?"

The quiet voice of Mr. Simms was like the purring of a well-oiled machine. His eyes were as clear as the lens of a lighthouse, and his words reminded her of St. Paul's words: "Though I have the tongues of men and of angels and have not love it profiteth me nothing!"

At length, after a long pause in which neither of them had spoken, Miss Jones said in short, disjointed sentences, "I guess I have made a mess of things. As you say, I cannot reproduce New England here in Burma. The Karens are not like the Yankees. Burma is not like America. The rains do pull one down. Last night a swarm of insects came

into my room. They were attracted by the lamp on my table while I was eating dinner. They gathered on the ceiling and the little house lizards, *ghekos* the children call them, came out after them. There were several of them, as many as seven or eight chasing the insects. One of them lost his footing and fell right into my soup plate. And then, what do you think, its tail broke off and was floating there in the soup while the reptile ran away. It just made me sick. When such things happen, I do not wonder that girls have had to go home and get rid of the ill effects of the climate. You say I must love the children. I guess I have failed there. I have tried to drive them. They are like their own pigs, they can't be driven. I wish I understood Christ better. I do need a change. Do you think I should go home to America? I would love to, but our work is here. What will you and Mrs. Simms do if I leave? It will be too hard on you and her. I don't want to go and leave you to carry on with the growing school and all the churches you have to look after." Her back stiffened and her eyes glared. "I just can't go and leave you to manage these unruly girls."

Again she broke down and cried. Something in Mr. Simms' quiet, well-controlled voice caused her to stop as soon as he began to speak. "Perhaps you are doing God's will by going rather than by staying. 'They also serve who only stand and wait.' You can do lots more if you get well. You want to truly represent Christ. You remember he often withdrew to the wilderness. Let me urge you

to go to Rangoon as soon as you can get packed, and then I will ask the mission treasurer to arrange for your passage on the next boat going to America. You have already had several years in the field, and you need feel no disgrace in leaving now, for you have given a real service to Burma, and I want you to be well enough to find yourself and come back and pick up the work as only a real well woman can."

Two weeks later the whole school went to the railway station to see their Mama leave for the strange, rich country beyond the setting sun. Many of the little girls were wiping tears from their eyes. They could hardly have told why. They would miss their Mama, even if she had been disagreeable at times. Naw Su was in the back of the crowd. She was attracting as little attention as possible. She could not understand why she felt both sad, as if she was somehow to blame for the situation, and glad. As the train pulled out, one of the girls remarked, "Mama gave us a lot, but she could not seem to love us."

CHAPTER XXVIII

NAW SU said to Miss Maynard, "If I pass this year, it will be my last in this school, for I am in the highest class." Her eyes glistened with pleasure at having her old Mama back. After a long time away Miss Maynard had returned to her old post at the mission to take over the vacancy left by Miss Jones. "I passed last year," continued the girl, "and now I shall have to go to Rangoon if I study any more. But I know a lot now and I—well, I don't know what I want to do. What does Mama want me to do?"

"You are now quite grown up," smiled that lady, "and we are delighted at the progress you have made. Your desire to learn all the books, as you used to say, has taken you a long way. You are one of our best pupils, and we see that you have kept to your study even though many things have hindered you, but you have been like a strong wind that blows clear and fresh every day. I always believed that you would do well. In America I told about you and your determination many times. I am glad to see that you have justified my faith in you."

"We are so glad to have you back again. Was it wrong for us not to like Mama Jones? She did work hard for us, but somehow we could not love

her as we love you. Do you think she really loved us?"

"Of course she loved you, or she would not have come all the long way from America to teach you."

"Yes, we know, but"—fingering the pattern of her *longyi*—"but she was not like you. We all love you."

"Now do not tell me tales about the other Mama. It is not good for you."

"But, Mama," persisted the girl, "we want to know. Do you really think she is a Christian?"

"How can you ask such a question?" Miss Maynard raised her hand to stop the girl, but as she searched the eyes of the other girls that were present, she saw that they were not in the least malicious, but only like the eyes of a people eagerly hunting for a hidden treasure that they felt must exist but that they could not locate.

"Please forgive me," Naw Su went on. "We girls treated her very badly. She told us to read our Bibles and to pray to God, but the more she told us the more we made faces behind her back. I used to imitate her and the girls would all laugh and then she would get angry and threaten to beat all of us. We nicknamed her 'Mama Tho-Ta' (scold) and made a lot of fun of her. Why was it that her talking never did us any good? I believe she wanted to make us good, but when she told us to be good, we just did not want to be. We were very bad, were we not?"

Miss Maynard was questioning Naw Su's mo-

tive. She did not want to gossip about her friend, Miss Jones, and yet it seemed as if the girl was trying to find a solution to a difficult problem and one that did not concern Miss Jones as much as it did the Christian religion. She wanted to be loyal to her friend, and yet it seemed as if there was a higher loyalty involved. Should she close the discussion and maintain the prestige of her position as a teacher and missionary, or should she let the girl go on and try to help her to see some of the principles involved in the unfortunate situation?

Naw Su's next question settled the matter. She asked: "Mama, why was Miss Jones always telling us to read our Bibles. She could not seem to explain the book very well, and we did not seem to be very much interested in it. Naw Blu says that the Bible is magic. If we read it, the devils will not be able to get at us, for they are afraid of the Bible. If we have it by our beds, the *nats* that cause sickness will not hurt us. Some of the girls keep their Bibles right under their pillows. Miss Jones told us to pray every night, but one time after a hard day's work on the lawn I tried to pray a long time and fell asleep. She came in and found me and scolded me. She was 'Mama Scold' all right. Seems as if the devils came all the more often when she was here. You know we have our own name for you, too. I hope you will not be angry—we call you 'Mama Ta Eh' (Mama Love). We know you love us, and we are so happy to have you back again. But please tell us. Were we not wrong in the way we treated Mama Jones?"

"I am glad if you like me. If I can really help you, I am grateful indeed," replied Miss Maynard, hoping to get the conversation away from the uncomfortable subject of Miss Jones, for the women were good friends, and Miss Maynard was not only surprised at the attitude of the girls but sincerely sorry. While she was trying to express some of the thoughts that rushed through her mind and to find something that would help the girl and not be a discredit to her associate, Naw Su took up the discussion. "When I first came to school, I was thrilled at everything, and I wanted to learn the Bible and all about it, but now I have not read it for over a month, and I roll up in my blanket and go to sleep without a prayer. I guess I am a real *pgha thu* (heathen). The more Mama Scold talked to us the less we wanted to read the Bible and the more mischief we wanted to do, for her scolding got to be funny. Since you have returned, we all feel ashamed. Do you suppose God will forgive us for being disobedient?"

Miss Maynard saw that the conversation had carried them on to the point where Naw Su's inquiring mind and heart were ready for real constructive teaching. Her trip to America, where she had visited the best schools, had helped her to see that children were not mere puppets into whom so much knowledge was to be pumped, but that they were expanding personalities to be let out. She had found a deeper realization of God herself and had learned that his responsiveness to prayer was not a mere myth but a vital commun-

ion. Here was a wonderful opportunity to try out her newly acquired knowledge.

Other girls were crowding about, and she could not give all of her attention to one girl at this time, and so she told Naw Su to look after the girl in the sick-room and to come to her that evening while the others were busy with night study. She felt that it was important to get this girl's mind settled. She also wanted time in which to think and pray about the matter.

Everything that Miss Maynard did that day seemed to have Naw Su in the background. And it was the more so during the afternoon when Naw Paw Tu, who was about Naw Su's age but rather dull in her studies, and a bit jealous of Naw Su's high standing, told Miss Maynard that Naw Su was in love and was probably going to be married as soon as she finished school. Miss Maynard did not know just what to make of this, and she decided to ask Naw Su when she came for their evening talk. Karen girls were very secretive about love affairs, and she was not surprised that Naw Su had not told her, and yet she kept wondering if Naw Paw Tu was telling the truth or trying to stir up trouble.

As soon as the girls had gone to the night study room and the dormitory was quiet, Naw Su picked up her neglected Bible and, wiping off the dust with her *longyi*, ran to Miss Maynard, who was waiting for her in her room.

"I have come," announced Naw Su, with Karen abruptness. "I brought my Bible. Is it really God's

word as people say it is? I want to know. Please tell me."

The eager eye, the tone of voice and the expectant poise of the body told Miss Maynard at a glance that her pupil was ready for anything. There was no putting off such eagerness. It was an opportunity, and a deep sigh involuntarily escaped as she realized her responsibility.

"Sit down, Naw Su," she said. "We must not be in a hurry. We may have to talk many times before we can learn all that we want to know about this matter. I have a lot to learn myself. We must ask him to teach us. Do not look at me as if I knew everything. I don't. Come, bow your head and let us just ask him to teach us right here and now."

As the words of the simple prayer were being formed, it seemed as if a warm spirit was filling the room and that they were indeed in the presence of a Teacher who could answer all their questions if they would only take time to listen.

The conversation lasted till after the girls had come back from their study hour. They peeked into Miss Maynard's room, but as they saw the two engrossed in conversation and oblivious to the little coughs that betrayed their presence, they went on wondering what great things were being talked about so earnestly.

Later Naw Su returned to the dormitory, and a little before the bell rang for "lights out," she called the girls and told them that she wanted them to have evening prayers with her. Here was

something that relieved the tension. The curiosity of the girls had mounted very high.

Naw Su read a few verses from the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, the part of scripture that she had just been talking over with Miss Maynard. Then she said:

“You know that I have been talking with Mama Ta Eh this evening. She has taught me a lot of things. I can’t tell you all she told me, but I do want to tell you something. She said that she reads her Bible to find out what to do. She says it is, as we know, written in old words, but that they will show us a lot of things if we will try to understand them. But the Bible is not magic. It will not keep off the evil spirits, even if we put it under our pillow. If we will listen to its directions, it will help us to understand that God is like an old father who knows everything, and when we ask questions, he talks back to us by putting ideas into our minds and tells us what to do when we cannot tell ourselves. She says that it is not repeating prayer as the Buddhists do that will help us, but that we must really want what we ask for. When the Bible says, ‘The Lord is my shepherd,’ it really means it, and if we want him to lead us, he will, but if we just say it and not mean it” (here she was tempted to say “as Mama Scold did,” but she stifled the words)—“if we really want to be like sheep, he will lead us kindly. I see that I have been acting foolishly about my Bible. I have been reading it just for words; but now I see that I must

read it to get its meaning for me. As Mama says, 'It has a meaning for us just as it had for the people who first heard it.' "

"Naw Su, you talk like a preacher. What are you going to do. Are you going to be a Bible Woman and go around preaching or are you going to get married?" asked Naw Paw Tu. There was a bit of a sting in her voice as she spoke.

Naw Su turned to her instantly and said in a voice that cut like steel, "There is not a boy in the world that I want to marry! I am going to do what God wants me to do." The bold front that she put on was to hide her real feelings. Not that she was in love, but for an instant the suggestion of human love appeared most attractive. She suppressed the desire and thought to herself, "I must talk with Mama about it." And then she rebuked herself inwardly at the thought, for she realized that love was not a thing to talk about. It was, she foolishly believed, a thing apart and something that this crazy world had to endure—a sort of sin. She had no idea that it could spring from a God who was regarded as too pure to look upon iniquity. Such thinking was a hold-over from her old Karen teaching, but she did not know that. The world is really full of all kinds of pitfalls, she thought. Then she said to the girls, "When we began talking, Mama Ta Eh told me that she did not know all things, as we thought she did, but she told me to stop talking and to pray, not to pray out loud, but to just sit still and think to God, and she said God would give us directions as to what to do. She

said that she needed to have God direct her and give her wisdom. Mama Scold never did anything like that. Mama Ta Eh also said that we are not good Christians unless we live and speak as Christ did while he was on earth. That is, if we say we love, we must really love and not get angry if things do not go our way. We must be like a hunting-dog that obeys only his master. When he begins to chase a deer, he does not see anything else. We must act like Christians, and if we say we live in love, we must really love each other. I guess that is what Mama does, and we like her and so let's do as she does. That will make us all happy."

"Will that help us to get good husbands?" piped up Naw Paw Tu. A chorus of laughter went around the room. "We girls will all have to have husbands sometime. I suppose that is the devil's side of us, but everyone seems to get used to it, and there is no other way to get children."

"Don't be silly," retorted Naw Su. "Husbands have to do with our bodies, but Miss Maynard says it is also of the spirit. We are Christians. Can't you see that Mama Ta Eh is thinking about God, even when she thinks about husbands? Come now, it's after bed time. We must pray and then go to bed." Naw Su assumed authority over a situation that she feared would get out of hand.

Miss Maynard was very busy, and it was several days before Naw Su could get time for another talk with her. The questions which had come up about trying to live a loving life and the more puzzling matter of husbands were constantly in her

mind, and she could find no solution. She was waiting for Miss Maynard to talk with her again. When she did, she told her what the girls had said and how hard it seemed for them to understand how the real Christian life was to be lived.

"Is it right for us girls to get married? The elders talk so much about young people keeping apart. Seems as if it was a sin to live together. Mama, why did you not get married?" she blurted out, as if the question was a burr that had been sticking to her skirt and was a relief to pull off.

Tender memories rushed through Miss Maynard's mind. Faces of boys she had known in college came back to her. She saw the eager pale face of a young preacher who had begged her to give him her hand and heart. She gathered herself and prayed that she might say the right words and have the attitude that would help the girl, for she had felt that there was a real lack of understanding among these people who had always had their marriages arranged for them.

Naw Su talked on: "Mama Ta Eh, you are so good. You are willing to answer our foolish questions. Please do not be angry with me. But really I do want to understand, and I know so little. How can the body be pure?"

CHAPTER XXIX

THE following Friday evening was the time for the mid-winter concert, put on by the pupils of the school. It consisted of songs, choruses, drills and dramatic exercises, and the children looked forward to it as a grand event. In this Naw Su was the leader of the girls and sang a solo, for she had an unusually clear voice which made her outstanding—even among the many sweet voices of the children. The leader of the boys was Saw Po Ta. Although he had not had much opportunity to talk with Naw Su, that had not prevented him from thinking about her and from building up in his imagination a plan for being married to her, after which they would clear a jungle tract together on the plains where they could find an easier path to prosperity than in the hills.

While one of the girls was singing a solo, it happened that Naw Su, who was helping a class of small children get ready for a drill which was to come next on the program, had to go back to the girls' dormitory to get the wands they were to use but had forgotten. Saw Po Ta saw an opportunity. He came up to her in the dark and said in a voice that betokened a lot of suppressed excitement, "My turtle dove, I am going to be a rich man. We will have a nest on the plains and we will clear the

jungle together, and even if we begin with a little bamboo shack, we will have a big, new house before long. I will be looking down the road for you."

Naw Su had only half stopped, and Saw Po Ta had followed as he talked. The lid was off of his pent-up feelings. It showed in every movement and tone of his voice. At that moment Naw Paw Tu, who jealously watched every movement of Naw Su, came around the corner of the building and heard the words, "I will be looking down the road for you."

What did this "looking down the road for you" mean? Naw Paw Tu was in a mood to put the worst meaning to the words. She suspected that Naw Su had promised to meet Saw Po Ta. Probably she had met him before. Naw Paw Tu decided that she would be "looking" too. From now she would be on the watch continually. Here was her opportunity to crush her rival. Karen-like she hid the thing in her heart and waited for a favorable opportunity to find out more and to use her newly-gained knowledge for her own purpose. Meanwhile, her imagination built up a structure that would have surprised even Saw Po Ta in its completeness and scope. She had them meeting secretly every dark night and carrying on a most exciting love affair.

Naw Su had been angered at Saw Po Ta's effrontery and at his bold words, but at the same time her vanity was aroused and there was something in the adolescent girl that took secret delight

in the knowledge that some young man was thinking of her. She persistently tried to put it off, but it kept coming back. One night she had a dream in which it seemed that she was in a hut in the jungle and that there were pigs and children underneath it. There was a man who was gathering betel nuts near-by. He seemed to be master of the place, and he was Saw Po Ta. Then she woke up with a start. It had all seemed so vivid and yet so elusive. Was it true? Was she really dreaming? What did dreams mean? Did it mean that she was to marry Saw Po Ta? Old folks used to say that dreams had a meaning and there were folk-lore stories which said that one must carry out in real life what one dreamed. But she did not want to marry anyone. Had she not come to school to escape marriage and the children and pigs and chickens that seemed to follow inevitably?

Naw Su did not sleep during the last two hours before the rising bell. Here was a problem that made her tremble. She did not want to marry. Miss Jones, if she were here, would tell her to open her Bible and read and pray, but she did not see how that would solve the problem. It had not seemed to make Miss Jones more happy or comfortable in her life. To Naw Su it seemed as if Mama Jones had a routine that must be gone through with, whether it helped or not.

Then she thought of her parents' desire to get her married off to a man of their choice, and that disturbed her all the more. She did not want Saw Po Ta, at least she thought she did not, and much

less did she want a dirty, jungly Karen from the hills.

"I came down to school because I wanted to be free from superstitious old customs and the fear of never knowing what to do," she told herself, "but now I seem to have gotten into more tangles than a fly in a spider's web. What shall I do?"

She could not give way to tears, for then the rest of the girls would wake up and ask her what was the matter. She did not want that. There was nothing to do but to lie there filled with dread. Were there devils that the fathers had talked about that could swoop down and torment one? Now it seemed as if, perhaps, they were right after all. At first she had thought that by being a Christian she would escape all the unpleasant things of life, but now they all seemed to be coming back with greater force than ever. Where could she run to and get rid of them all? If she should run, would not the devils follow her? If she only had some of the charms which the old women said were a sure cure for all ills, perhaps they would be a comfort to her now. But she had none of them, and she had been taught in the school that they were useless.

All the next week she went about her studies in a dull, listless way. On Sunday she hoped that the worship would help her. But the Karen pastor had talked about the wicked husbandmen. She did not even listen to him. She was in the choir and enjoyed singing the anthem but afterward she sat as dull as a turtle. Nothing seemed to help her.

Miss Maynard saw her lack of interest in things

and tried to induce her to talk, but Naw Su was stolid, and Miss Maynard soon realized that she was making no progress with her, and so waited for a better opportunity. Meanwhile, Naw Paw Tu was getting more and more elated and was trying her best to shine in class and to make herself popular with the other girls. She even cast a sly glance at Saw Po Ta once in a while. She always did this when she thought Naw Su would see it, hoping that it would add to her discomfort. In this she was successful.

Naw Paw Tu took occasion to come to Mama Maynard and offer to help her. One morning the Mama had set her to dust out the cupboard in the medicine room and to destroy the cockroaches that swarmed in on the warm nights. Later she came in to see how the girl was getting on and stopped for a few words. "You are doing a good job," said the missionary. "I have wanted to clean those things for a long time but I could not get to them."

"Do I help you as well as Naw Su?" asked the girl. "You know she may be married soon and then you will need someone else to run errands for you."

"What! Is Naw Su planning to get married?" The voice told the girl she had succeeded in getting attention. "What do you mean? Who is she going to marry?" It then struck her that Naw Paw Tu had taken a more active part in things during the few weeks in which Naw Su had been growing more and more listless. Was there a connection,

she asked herself? Then, bringing herself under better control, she quietly asked Naw Paw Tu to tell her what she knew about the coming marriage.

She discovered that Naw Paw Tu did not really know much about Naw Su and her plans. She was so vague and so conflicting in her statements that she concluded it was mostly a matter of imagination with the girl. However, she felt that she must talk with Naw Su about the matter, and, if possible draw her out that she might learn the cause of her apparent unhappiness.

She called Naw Su into her room the following evening.

"Why are you so uncomfortable, Naw Su?" she asked her.

"I am all right. I am not uncomfortable, Mama," replied the girl.

"But you don't look happy. You have not been around as usual. Your face looks heavy and disappointed. Tell me about it," she pleaded.

"I have nothing to tell you," was the Karen-like reply.

"You are not thinking of leaving school, are you?"

"What makes Mama say that?" The girl perked up a bit.

"I thought you might have had bad news from your village. Your folks are not thinking of getting you married, are they?"

"Why does Mama think that?" Naw Su cried, as if she had been struck by a slap of the hand.

"Nothing, I just asked you, for I know many

times the parents try to get their daughters married off as soon as they are grown. Perhaps you do not want to be married."

"Why do you ask me that question, Mama?" Then all of a sudden the dream came back to Naw Su, and the picture of herself in the hut on the freshly cleared paddy field. This choked her, and she burst out, "Mama, why do we have so many things to trouble us? We are just poor Karen girls and we want to find a way to freedom. But everything is holding us back. It is like lugging heavy paddy baskets up the steep hill all day long. I do not know what to do."

"Sit down, Naw Su, and let us talk about the things that are heavy on your back. What is troubling you? Do not be afraid to tell me about them. I will try to understand. Perhaps we can find a way out. I am sure that God will help us."

It was more than an hour later that Naw Su, with tears in her eyes, went back to her mat and lay down. During the conversation she had admitted that she had not found the freedom that she had been seeking. She still felt bound by the rules and regulations and legalism which Miss Jones had imparted to her. She was said by the church to be saved, but the salvation had not brought her peace or release. She had not enjoyed her Bible as she felt she ought. It seemed as if the magic which she sought in the Bible had not worked. Prayer, to which she had tried to be faithful, had not brought her any relief. She could not shake off the effect of her dream. Every time she

saw Saw Po Ta something flared up within her. She could not tell whether it was fate, or fear, or desire for him. They all seemed jumbled together in her thought.

What Miss Maynard said to her gave her a sense of slight relief. She felt that the Mama did love her, and from her she got a sense of serenity that was reassuring. Beyond that she did not seem to find very much help.

The next night was Wednesday, and the children all gathered at the school assembly room, which also served as a chapel. They were surprised to see an old man come in with Mr. Simms, and after they had sung two or three hymns Mr. Simms introduced him as Mr. Walton. Naw Su studied his face. She remembered his visit several years before, and the kind way in which he had talked with her. He was wearing a full beard. Some of the children laughed and whispered that he looked like a goat (the sight was strange, for Karens do not have beards), but Naw Su was too intent on watching him and hoping that somehow he might give her a bit of enlightenment. Her eyes were glued to his kindly, smiling face, and she caught every word that he was saying.

"He taketh the lambs in his bosom," he read, and then he said, "Jesus lived in our human flesh, and he knows that we often find the way hard. Sometimes we are like the lambs that fall and break a leg, and he does not scold us, but he lifts us up and carries us till we can walk again. He knows our every weakness and can sympathize

with us and restore us to strength so we can join the rest in following along the way he leads. And that way leads up to a life that is freedom from all our superstitions and the fears that hold us down like dead weights." He says, "Cast your care on the Lord for he careth for you."

He talked on, simply and sincerely, and Naw Su was sorry when he stopped, for she felt that here was someone who could understand her troubles.

Before she went to bed that night, she had to go and ask Miss Maynard what the girls were to do the next morning. As they were talking, Miss Maynard suddenly thought that perhaps Naw Su could talk with Mr. Walton. He was old, but still he understood the Karens as few men did. He was kindly and sympathetic and he had a quiet serenity that showed a deep experience with God. He might be able to help the girl.

"Naw Su," Miss Maynard said, "would you like to talk with Mr. Walton? Perhaps he can explain some things to you more fully than I have been able to do."

"Would he talk with me?" exclaimed Naw Su. "He is a great teacher and will not want to spend his time talking to a mere girl like me. I did like what he said last night, and I like the way he smiles. But I am too insignificant for his attention."

"I don't think Mr. Walton will feel that way about it. You know he goes about to help people all the time. We are always stimulated by his

visits here, and we are sorry when he must leave. I wish he could stay all the time. He likes children and says that there is no time wasted that is given to them. Shall I tell him you want to have him talk to you in the morning?"

"If Mama thinks that is right, I will be glad," replied Naw Su.

The next morning before school Naw Su answered the note Mr. Walton had sent to her through Miss Maynard, and the two, the white-haired American, and the black-haired Karen girl, were soon sitting opposite to each other in Mr. Simms' study. They were alone.

Naw Su told him, as he wisely drew her out in talk while he listened sympathetically, that she had wanted to know books, that she hated the slavery of the village life, that she wanted to be free from taboos and fears, that she wanted to find out about the world and that she wanted to go back and tell her folks about it all, but that now she had come to a block in her road. She loved Jesus and felt that he had saved her, but then she had gotten into difficulties because she had not liked Miss Jones and now she was all mixed up and did not know which way to turn. Was all her desire for freedom just a false hope?

Mr. Walton was amazed at the depth of her desires and the insight she had into human nature and at her keen sense of right and wrong. He was seeking, as in prayer, for a solution to her problem, for he knew that she could find it if she was sincere and had the right direction. He thought of

the differences between them: the girl, an Oriental, and he, an Occidental; she, a young woman, and he, an old man. To be sure he had a richness and maturity of experience that was of service anywhere there was human need, but at the present moment he did not see clearly how to meet Naw Su's need, although he felt that there must be a solution.

As she stopped, he prayed that he might say the right thing for her sensitive soul. He began carefully and thoughtfully, "You have taken the first step toward freedom by talking freely to me about your doubts and fears. As long as you kept them bottled up within you, they were liable to burst like a soda water bottle and cause a lot of trouble. You have let them out. The mere fact that you have talked them over with someone who knows Christ will give you immense relief." Then came a sudden inspiration. He said, "Thra Ta Wa and Thra Mu Naw Gey, his wife, are with me. They are Karens and they know God as fully as I do. I think if you talk with Thra Mu she can help you to a clearer understanding than I can. I will call her, and if you will tell her all about your troubles and withhold nothing, she will help you. I believe your troubles will roll off your back like the rain off a duck."

The next two hours were spent with the kindly and soft spoken Thra Mu, who had herself come out of non-Christian surroundings and had become one who could show others the way that she had found to be full of joy and freedom and usefulness.

That was why she and her husband were travelling with Mr. Walton as his assistants in his evangelistic work.

"Do you not think it would be nice to have a fine house and live in a wide field and have plenty to eat and good clothes to wear?" Thra Mu asked, after Naw Su had told her the dream that had been tormenting her.

"Yes," replied the girl. "That would be good, but—what would my mother and father do? How could I help them? I would not be really free. I left the village because it was in such slavery to superstition. They are all so dirty and so hopeless. Will I be free if I get married and have children? I can't help them."

"Do you think it is wrong to marry?" asked the older woman.

"No, I guess it is not wrong, but somehow for me it does not seem just what I want. I long to be free and help others to freedom. What must I do? Please tell me. Am I all wrong? I don't know."

"Jesus says that 'If anyone willeth to do my will he shall know the teaching.' Let me ask you one question first. Are you willing to do what God wants you to do?"

Naw Su waited. Her mind ran back over her flight from the village, over her days in school, the scoldings she had had from Miss Jones and the love she had from Miss Maynard—and then the dream came to her. She recoiled from it, and turning to Thra Mu, she said, decisively, "I do want freedom. I want it so I can help others. I

cannot do it by myself. If it is doing God's will that will make me free and helpful to others like you and Mama Ta Eh, I will do it. Yes, I will turn myself over to him. I want to be free from superstition and dirt and poverty. I think I can help others to be free. That is my greatest desire."

"Let us wait here quietly before God. Let us open our hearts to him and he will show us the way. What we need is a real willingness to do whatever he directs us to do. Do not be in a hurry. It took the Apostle Paul three years to find out God's will for him. Jesus often went aside and spent time in prayer. Let us now close our eyes and wait, meditate and pray."

They sat quietly, clasping each other's hands, and as they felt the strength of each other's personality, and the willingness to seek until they found God's will, they had a sense of his presence and of the meaning of Christ's claim to oneness with him. Gradually a peace came over them.

Naw Su looked up, "Thra Mu, I see now. My urge to be free came from God. I had to run away. I came to school. God has been guiding me. I shall not marry now, but I will accept a further guidance from God, and I will take each new step as he continues to lead. I will go back and help him to set my people free. I now know that is his will for me. I am very glad. It seems as though I was floating on the clouds like an eagle. Thank God for his love and that I can know that he wants to work through me. That is real freedom. I am so happy."

CHAPTER XXX

N^{AW} SU was standing with a group of girls in front of the schoolhouse watching the English inspector go away. The pupils had been passing through the ordeal of the annual examination. They had just finished their last arithmetic paper and the red-faced young inspector had ordered his Indian "peon" to gather up the papers and put them into his dispatch basket and carry them down to his gharry that was waiting below. The girls were interested to see the servile Indian, with his big white turban and his sash denoting that he belonged to the Education Department of Government. The sash was sagged down by the weight of the heavy brass plate which was his official badge. They watched him as he nervously put the basket in the carriage; then he crouched low, and entered the vehicle, sitting gingerly on the seat, facing the back, while the inspector sat on the back seat. The driver cracked his whip impressively, and they were off.

"I wish I could get hold of that paper of mine in the basket," remarked Naw Paw Tu. "I would mark it 'passed.' "

"I did my best," said Naw Su. "I think I got

four out of the six questions right. Anyhow I am not going to worry. I hope I passed. If I did not, I can come back to school next rains."

"O you can do anything, Naw Su," remarked one of the smaller girls. "You can help Mama. You can teach. You can read a lot. You do not need to worry. I wish I had finished the highest class as you have." Her admiring eyes looked at Naw Su as if she were a being from another world who had condescended to come down to the school for a while.

"Don't look at me in that way," pleaded Naw Su. "I feel like a chicken that the mother hen has driven away to wean and the poor thing does not know where to go. I guess I had better gather up my things and fix up my bundle. The men are going to the hills in the morning, and I suppose I will have to go with them." At this she turned and went to the dormitory and the other girls followed, for they too had to prepare to leave.

"We shall miss you, Naw Su, and all of you too," said Miss Maynard as they passed her room on their way to their dormitory. "Come in and sit down a few minutes. You will not have to go until tomorrow morning, and I want to see you a few minutes before you leave."

When they were seated, she began: "Naw Su, you have been a great help to us here in the school. You have studied hard and learned a whole lot. You have been an older sister to the other girls. It will be hard for us if you go away. I have been

talking with Mr. Simms, and we have decided to ask you if you will come back and teach here and help the smaller girls next year."

"O, Mama, thank you very much! I do love the school, and I like to be here near you. But I cannot teach and I—I don't know what to say. Do you really want me? Do you think I could do it? I would just love it, but—I cannot say now. I cannot answer now. I cannot think what to say." And she abruptly ran off to the girls' room as if she was running away from a cobra.

"Mama Ta Eh, can I come in and talk with you?" called Naw Su's voice from the curtain later in the evening after her bundle, with its Bible, song-book, school-books and a few clothes had been made ready for the journey home.

"O, Mama, I do love you. I don't want to leave school and not see you every day. You have loved me and all of us girls so much that I just can't bear to go off and leave you. I want to take you with me to our village. I wish you would stay with me always." It was like the voice of a child pleading to stay with its mother when cruel hands would snatch it away. "Mama, won't you please come?"

"Come in, Naw Su, and sit down. I am glad that you have come to see me and have not gone off without a word, as some of the girls have done. I do love you, but I am afraid I cannot come up to the hills now, for I am very tired after the year of teaching and I need a rest during vacation. What have you decided about my suggestion that you

come back to school and be my assistant? You could then be with me."

"Mama, I would love to do it. But every time I think I will say 'yes' to you something comes up in my heart, and it seems to hold me back from saying 'yes.' It says 'no,' and I do not understand it."

"It may be that God wants to have you teach in your own village and help your own folks there. Or are you expecting to get married when you get back? Probably your parents will want to have you settled down with a husband."

"No, Mama, I don't want to get married. Even if my mother and father do try to make me do it I will resist as I did the last time I was home. I am certain that God wants me to go home. As I pray, I feel that there is something in the village for me to do, but what it is I do not yet know. What do you think, Mama?"

"Why not get the children in the village together and have a little school?"

"But the village elders do not want that. They have opposed schools all along and they say they do not want to destroy the customs of their forefathers, and that schools are hated by the *bgha* and learning to read spoils the girls. They do not want a school, and I am afraid that I could not do anything there. Yet, I feel that I must go and visit the folks this vacation. I do wish I knew how to help our people. I have gotten my education and now I remember how I used to say that I would make the village free from their old taboos, but I do not

see how I can do it. They are just as set against it as they ever were. It would make a storm if I should start a school there and probably they would drive me out."

"Then you could come back and help me here," remarked the Missionary with an air of confidence, as if it would serve the end that she most desired.

"I think the elders would be glad to have me do that. It would save them a lot of talk. They have always thought of me as a trouble-maker, and if I come back here, they will be glad, and it will be nice for me." Then, after a pause, as if weighing her words, "I think that God may want me to come back and help you." The words were no sooner on the air than a sudden conviction followed and with a toss of her shiny, black head and a gleam in her starry eyes, she said, "No, no, Mama. I will not come back here. I will stay in the village. I believe God wants me there. I will stir up another storm and this will be one that shall be a real wind that will blow away all their fears. I am going to stay in the village and I am not going to get married either." Holding out her hand in farewell, she said, "Pray for me, Mama. This is what I know God wants me to do, and I am going to do it if he gives me strength. Good-bye, Mama Ta Eh. God bless you." She turned and went out of the room.

While it was still dark little candles gleamed in the rooms of the school children as they made their preparations to start the long walk home. A few elders had been told that the school was closing and had come to escort their children to their

hill villages. Other children were grouped so that those going the same road could all travel together as far as possible. They must be off before it was really light in order that they might get far on the way before the sun was hot. There was no time for ceremony. The school cook had been up for hours preparing the last meal of rice. This was hastily stored away by the children, and the visiting elders and they were off, just as the stars were fading in the sky. The school year was over. For a few it was the end of their school days and now they must face the struggle of life in the hills. How far could they apply their new-found faith and their newly acquired ways to the age-old fears of the stolid people who did not want to be disturbed?

The girls were not the only ones who faced the future with mixed feelings. Among the boys there were also those who had found much that was new but who feared the elders of their own villages. The enthusiasm that they had felt while they were together in school was dampened. Many villages had begun to turn to the new faith and to its revolutionary ways, but they were not so numerous as those that still clung to ancestral customs.

Saw Po Ta was not with the departing company. It was not the conflict of old and new customs that had troubled him. He could not see why his charms were impotent to win the attention of Naw Su. She had repelled him at every turn. He had been disappointed. His love soured and was turning to hate. That turned to self-pity, and for him

life had little charm. He lost interest in finishing school and getting his credits.

One day a recruiting officer for the Karen Military Battalion that had recently been formed by the Government, came to the school to talk to the older boys and tell them the advantages of joining the organization which would give them good pay, showy uniforms and allow them to carry rifles and help make their people recognized as a part of the country of Burma. Here was an escape. Saw Po Ta signed his name and was proud that he could write, and after a physical examination by the civil surgeon, he followed the officer and was no longer in school to bother Naw Su. She thought that she was finished with him. But often strange things happen to trails that seem to diverge.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE trip home had been slowed down by the fact that many of the children had to be left at various villages along the way and the hospitable Karens urged the visitors who were going farther to stop and eat or sleep at their houses. So it was a full week after beginning the journey before Naw Su and a few who were going farther than she found themselves climbing the steep path to her village. They crossed the stream where some of the younger children were playing in the water. They looked at Naw Su inquisitively, for she was dressed in the Burmese costume, a red *longyi* and a loose-fitting white lawn jacket. They had seen few such costumes and laughed at the strange sight. Naw Su greeted them but they were too shy to respond and ran behind the bushes and stuffed their hands into their mouths to keep their laughter from being heard. Naw Su noticed the dirty *hsays* that they had left on the bank of the stream and compared them with the clean clothes which the children in the school had been taught to keep well washed.

As they ascended the hillside, the pigs were running about, scavenging the village filth. They started with grunts of surprise and ran into the

bushes. The chickens, hunting for stray worms and other bits of food, moved slightly away from the path. Two or three mother hens were scratching for their flocks in the pile of paddy husks that surrounded the paddy pounder where the girls had been cleaning the rice. Everything was just as dirty and neglected and cluttered up as when Naw Su had left. She sensed it now as she never had before.

The commotion brought the women to their doors or to peek through the cracks in the woven bamboo sides of their houses, to see who was coming. They too withdrew, for they thought she was a Burman and they were afraid until Naw Su called out, "I've come back."

"Oh, it is Naw Su," the women exclaimed. "She's back." Then they all came out boldly and looked at her. "You're a Burman," remarked one of her aunts. "You are no longer a Karen like us," laughed another, making fun of her and to make conversation.

Her mother was sitting in the sun. She had been poorly and she felt the cold of the night air. This morning she had sat out in the front of her house to get a little strength from the direct rays of the sun. She could not see very clearly and had not recognized the woman in Burmese costume. Now that the other women had called Naw Su's name she realized who it was. She made no move to get up. The return of the daughter did make her heart flutter a bit, but she stolidly made no outward sign of her happiness, for it was not unmixed with anx-

ity. The return of the girl brought with it the memory of her independence and her unwillingness to conform to the village customs. She was still resentful of Naw Su's rebellion at their cherished plans for her marriage and at her continual chaffing at their taboos and fears. "Well, the brat is back again," she muttered to herself. "I wonder what she will do now. Will we be able to get her married and settled down? I hope that we can arrange that before I have to go on to the upside-down land."

As Naw Su came along to her own house and went up the rough ladder, she was struck, as never before, with the untidiness of the scene. There was dirt everywhere. The cooking place was a mass of ashes and charred remains of firewood. The pots were as black as smoke and soot could make them. There were remains of rice scattered over the coals, bits of uneaten greens, and one half section of bamboo, in which some kind of soup had been served, was still reeking with the remains of many servings. Over the fire, which was now but a smoldering mass, the shelves of bamboo were hung with many festoons of cobwebs, heavy with soot that had caught on them when the flames shot up. The motley array of old discarded pots, of bamboo trays for winnowing rice, and an old mortar, stained with red chili and dried seeds crusting the sides, were disgusting.

Naw Su turned from it all to take her bundle into the inner room of the house, and there she was almost choked by the odors of unwashed blankets

and cast-off garments that were piled in an ill-smelling heap in the middle of the floor. Here, too, the bamboo rafters were heavy with soot and the smell of smoke that covered wood or bamboo pervaded everything. How well she had remembered the smells, and once she had thought that they meant home to her. But now she felt different about them. Mixed with the atmosphere of home was that of the utter desolation of dirt, disorder, and a death-like stagnation which at first irritated her and made her want to take up her bundle and start back to Mama Maynard and the town.

She dropped down on the dirty floor and began to pity herself for having to live in such surroundings with such fear-stricken people. Then it seemed as if she heard a voice—was it the voice of God?—"Did you not promise me that you would come back and make your village new? Because you see it in terrible need will you now turn away? You promised to do whatever I wanted you to do. Can I not give you strength to bring order out of chaos and peace out of fear? Why do you quail, oh you of little faith?"

The challenge struck home. "I will lift up my head. I will keep my promise. O God, give me courage and I will do things. I will do them with your help right here in the midst of all these taboos and fears and all this dirt. I will. I will. I will. Help me, Father. Give me your love for my lost people."

That night the dirt, the rats running around,

the restless buffaloes under the house, the cock that insisted on being ready to welcome the dawn before midnight, all kept her awake, but her self-pity had gone. Her prayer for love had been answered, and she was thinking of her mother who was so wan and pale and weak, and of her father who, when he came in from the betel garden, had to rest at the foot of the ladder before he could mount the rungs. They would need a lot of love and help. Then she thought of the relatives who had gathered around the hearth that evening and she wanted to tell them about the strange things that she had been accustomed to in the city.

The next day, after she had swept up the rooms a bit, trying not to be too drastic in putting them to rights, she took her travel-stained clothes down to the spring to wash them. The women laughed at her and told her that if she washed her clothes too much, she would wear them out and they would not last long.

It was good to be home. The crisp air refreshed her. She also felt a release from the routine of school and she spent a good bit of her time sleeping. But she could not seem to get into the routine of village life. True, she went to the spring and brought up the water joints, and she cooked the rice and helped feed the chickens and pigs, but beyond that she did little. After a week or two she was restless and wanted to be doing something. She saw so much to do. But experience had taught her that she must go slow if she was to accomplish any real good. She must pray and rely on

God, her manager, to guide her. She went to the jungle to pray, since there was no other place. She realized that if she started on a revolutionary program for village cleanliness or for starting a school, there would be a storm of protest. That would not do now.

She missed her schoolmates. Most of all she missed the guidance of her teacher, and just when she seemed to need it most. Despite her loud protestations at the school that she wanted nothing to do with the boys, she had to confess to herself that there was something about school life that centered about boys. She recalled the discussions among the girls when boys were the main topic. She caught herself thinking, "I would be glad to see Saw Po Ta come up the village path. I wonder where he is now? In the military, off in some far-away station, I suppose, and having to drill every day. He is wearing a uniform. He must look fine. I wonder if he still thinks of me? I wonder why I keep thinking of him? Will I ever see him again?" Then she banished the thought. "No, I have promised that I would come here and teach. I will not think of him."

"Weh Mu Er," said a little girl who had been following Naw Su around the village one day, "we like to hear you sing. Will you get that book you have and sing to us? We like to hear it."

Here was something she could do. It snatched her out of her day-dreams. Saw Po Ta faded from the mind as she got her book and squatted on the mat, while four or five of the little tots drew up

close to listen. At last this was something she could do, and here were the girls asking for it.

"I will sing a few songs that we used to sing in school," she told them as she got her song-book.

"Can we learn to sing?" asked one of the tots after Naw Su had finished a hymn. "Will the *nats* hurt us if we sing?"

"No, it will keep them away. There is one song that they sing in the city which says that the devil (he is the big *nat*) weeps when he sees the weakest Christian on his knees, and a Christian song is a prayer. I will teach you how to sing if you wish."

What one girl did, the others wanted to do also, and it was not long before Naw Su had eight or ten of them gathered around her. As she sat on the floor, with her song-book open, she taught them to follow her in the singing. They thought it was great fun and they kept on humming the tunes when they had returned to their own houses.

Then one of the girls asked her one day, when they were singing and she saw Naw Su looking at the words in the book, "Can't we learn to read songs out of the book also? We could sing better, couldn't we?"

The rest was easy.

By the time the rains were to begin two or three of the elders of Naw Su's village who had been encouraged by a travelling evangelist, came to her and told her that she might have as many children as would come to study books with her.

Her class proved a real attraction. Even young men seemed to find a thrill in coming to "school."

Perhaps it was because of their interest in their teacher, but nevertheless they studied.

Thus it was that, without any drastic move on her part, Naw Su's dream of becoming a teacher in her own village was realized. She was very happy and sent a letter to Mama Ta Eh.

Dear Mama Ta Eh:

When we talked about my teaching I did not know what I was going to do. But God has opened a way for me where I felt He was calling, and it has turned out better than I had expected. Now, even my parents seem to like me, and the whole village is trying to learn to sing. There are many children here, and they are strangely willing to come to school. The elders say that next year they will build us a schoolhouse and some of them think that if they worship God they will be free from their old taboos. Please send me some paper and some books and slates. Mama, I thank you for teaching me love. You are love, and I want to be like you.

Always your devoted pupil,

Naw Su

It would have surprised Miss Maynard if she could have stepped into that rough mountain village to have seen Naw Su with a dozen girls and five or six boys, squatting on their mats in the room of her house. They had almost nothing to use. There were no books, but they had gathered the smooth sheaths of bamboo and with bits of charcoal had made rough attempts at forming the let-

ters of the Karen alphabet. The hour that they liked best was the hour of song. Their natural aptitude for rhythm made them easy pupils to teach, and they shouted the songs that they learned by heart, all over the village.

Naw Su was very happy, and yet sometimes she became rather wistful and wondered if there was something lacking in her life after all.

CHAPTER XXXII

SAW PO TA remarked, "I wish that old white-faced foreigner was transported to his own cold country." The boys in the Karen barracks were all keyed to high tension. They could not sleep, even though it was near midnight. There was a *pwe* (theatrical show) in the village about half a mile down the road toward Mandalay, and the raucous sounds of the Burmese band, with its shrill flutes, its horns, and the steady rhythmic beating of the drums, sent everybody's blood tingling through his veins.

"I'll bet that if he had seen a *pwe* once, he would not have given that silly order that we were to stay in barracks tonight," said the tall recruit from Bassein. "Did you hear that roar of laughter from the crowd? That must have been a rare joke! What fools we are to sit here and have all that fun going on right near-by and we cannot even hear the shouted words, much less see the antics of the clown as he cavorts with the chorus girls."

"Go to sleep and forget it," said the boy from Henzada. "Don't you know our teachers told us in the school that it was bad for us to hear and see those bad jokes and that they kept us awake and

all stirred up and that we would commit sin if we went to those unclean shows? We had better get to sleep."

"Yes, I know our teachers never let us go. How I itched on my bed every time there was a *pwe* in town. I wondered what it was all about and why the crowds shouted in such roars of laughter. But they kept a close watch on us and we were locked in and so I never saw a show."

"You were a good little boy," said the speaker from Bassein.

"Stop your talking," growled Saw Po Ta. "I never saw a show in Toungoo. I never had a chance, but now I am no longer a schoolboy. I am a man and soldier, and I am not going to be ridden over by that white foreigner with his stuck-up mustache. Say, you fellows, keep quiet. If we just make the sentry think that we are sleeping, by and by we can sneak out and get a look. By all the *nats*, that will be real fun! Put your lights out. Get into your beds. Pretend to go to sleep and then just wait. When the sentry is down at the other end of the yard, we can slip out and he will never know it. Roll up your blankets on your cots and cover them with sheets. Make them look as if you were in the bed. Hist! Everybody keep perfectly quiet."

The loud clanging of the cymbals kept their blood tingling. But they tried to listen to the steady beating of the military boots that walked up and down and sometimes moved faster or slower, following the tempo of the drum beating. But despite all that they could do several of the boys slipped

off into sleep, and their loud snoring made the rest feel more secure, for that would mean fewer would be trying to slip out and there would be less likelihood of being caught. Saw Po Ta tossed from side to side. He had never had a chance to really see a show.

With each shout of the crowd he tried to imagine what kind of a raw joke had been pulled, or what horse-play was going on between the clown and the chorus girl. How he longed to get out and enjoy the fun. But he must be careful. If the company officer had given a command, he usually saw to it that it was obeyed.

"Hang these stiff Englishmen. Why did they come here to bother poor boys who want a little fun?"

It was past midnight. The music was taking on a fiercer turn, for it was when the hours became small that the fun really began and the actors were getting warmed up. Saw Po Ta and two companions slipped out of their barracks in the shadows and soon were squatting on some mats among the crowd. They had covered themselves with old, well-faded *longyis* and tied old towels about their heads to make them look like village Shans. They had kept out of the rays of the torches that lighted up the stage.

It was a new experience for Saw Po Ta. He could hardly believe that he was actually watching the *pwe*. There was the rude stage, with its line of torches. There were the girls, just now

dancing and making their calls to the *nats*. How graceful they were, how slim their writhing bodies, and their supple arms, and how skillfully they jumped up and down and threw themselves around. He began to edge closer to get a clearer view of their actions.

Just then the clown came from behind the curtain. His face was covered with blotches of charcoal. He was dressed in old rags, and he was indeed a sight. Now he sidled up to the leading dancer, made a rude remark to her and she, just in the act of making a graceful movement of the arm, suddenly changed it to a quick slap that resounded all over the place, and the clown feigned to fall down. The shout of laughter that broke out from the crowd obscured the words that came from the lips of the falling clown, but the imagination supplied the lack and the laughter continued. Thus it went on. Saw Po Ta became more and more interested. His knowledge of the high classical Burmese was slight, and he did not understand all the allusions, but still there was enough to set him on edge and send hot and cold waves up and down his spine.

After a little, as he was getting farther and farther into the crowd, he found himself on the same mat with the old man whose house he had visited when he walked out to the fields a few weeks before. When he could turn away from the sights on the stage, he saw that the old man's daughters were with him. One was a girl whom he had seen

in the bazaar and who had given him thrilling glances as he came away from her house after his visit.

"This is heaven," thought Saw Po Ta. "Here we can have more than I ever dreamed of before." The girls were intent on the show. They were so absorbed in the play, that they did not notice the young man who had edged so near them. Saw Po Ta hardly knew which he enjoyed best, the horse-play on the stage, or the sight of this lovely girl on the next mat to him. He looked first at the one and then at the other. When the crowd shook with laughter at the next raw, vulgar humor that floated down from the platform, instinctively he turned to the girl. The blood ran through his veins as she turned to see how others were taking the joke, only to find her eyes meeting those of Saw Po Ta. For an instant she did not recognize whose eyes they were, for the old *longyi* and the big towel wound around his head looked vastly different from the smart uniform and felt hat of the soldier. But the message of the eyes broke through the disguise, and with a very slight curling of her lips, she dropped her eyes to the mat. The mischief had been done. They had recognized each other and each was caught by a wave of passion that they hardly understood. Her natural coyness kept her eyes on the mat for some time. Saw Po Ta pulled a bit to one side to get in the shadow of a post that would make him less easy to be observed. But he could not take his eyes off of the girl. The play was from now on only of secondary

interest. He laughed at the jokes, and he watched the dancing girls, but every sight and sound brought not the impersonal vibration of erotic love, but the thrill of a new-born passion for this exquisite bit of loveliness so near to him. And yet, every law of convention prohibited him from coming closer or from touching her. All conventions demanded that the two conceal their emotions and remain as silent and as unconcerned as the Buddhas that were sitting in front of the village monastery, on the grounds of which the show was taking place.

Saw Po Ta remembered that there would be dire punishments meted out to any member of his company who had disobeyed orders and left the barracks to enjoy the *pwe*. This fear sent a new kind of chill down his spine. The lovely girl so near him was well worth the risk, he decided. If only he could get her away from her watchful parents, he would—well, he did not know what he would do, but at least just to be alone with her would be heaven.

It was rather a dazed boy who rolled out of his bed at reveille the next morning. The sergeant looked at him, and thought he knew why the boy did not seem as alert as usual, but it was better to say nothing. Better let suspicions rest.

The next day new orders came from headquarters. The companies must prepare for a maneuver. They must all equip themselves for a route march and take their tents and be prepared to spend three days marching to the east toward Lashio, as

if they were to meet an invading force from that border. Every man in the company cursed his luck. No more slipping away in the night to watch the *pwe*. They would be too far away to get to see any more of the show. Surely military life had lost its charms.

All along the route of the march Saw Po Ta dragged heavy feet. His thoughts were back at the *pwe*, and he was retelling himself the jokes of the night before, for large slices of vulgarity had stuck to his mind as they have to men's thoughts all through the history of the race.

Now they could throw down their heavy guns. They were making their camp, setting up tents, and rolling out their blankets for the night. By some strange quirk of the mind, as Saw Po Ta lay down to sleep, it was not the Shan girl who came into his line of mental vision, but it was another pair of very bright eyes, and they looked at him across the room of his old school at Toungoo. The carefully chosen words that he had written on the little slips of paper came to him, and he seemed to be able almost to put out his hand and feel the touch of one who warmed his heart in a strange and thrilling way. He tossed on the ground. It seemed as if it had been his hard lot to have been assigned to the roughest bit of soil on which to sleep. The rest of the boys were snoring, but there was no sleep for him. Two girls floated across his consciousness, as if they were clouds lazily blown about without direction.

CHAPTER XXXIII

CORPORAL SAW PO TA was now a seasoned soldier. The recruits had had two years in which to become hardened. They had drilled on the plains at Maymyo. They had been sent to the borders of Siam. They had been stationed at Moulmein, and now they were established in the barracks back at Maymyo. Life had become monotonous. Saw Po Ta had often longed for the freedom of his mountain home, but the routine of the soldier had been instilled into his life, and he was now taking it as a matter of course and cared little what happened, just so long as he could get on without having to be put in the guard house or being bawled out by his officers. He had been promoted to corporal, and he felt very proud of himself. It was good to be in Maymyo again. Here the country was interesting. The Shans were easy-going. Their five-day bazaars relieved the monotony. Then the countryside would leave the fields and gardens and come into town for a day of sallies of wit, and to bargain over produce, and to sit at the tea tables and exchange every bit of gossip that could be remembered, embellishing every incident. The girls who came to the bazaar never failed to have a "comeback" that was sure

to bring the laugh on any fellow who tried to be fresh with them.

The first afternoon that Saw Po Ta could get leave he went out to the village down the road, and there he sat on the veranda of a house where he had often visited. There was a small baby crawling about on the mat. No one asked any questions. He looked a good deal like a Karen, but then of course the Karens and the Shans looked a lot alike. Saw Po Ta, like nearly all the peoples of Burma, played with him. That was not unusual, for children always appealed to the hearts of the men, both young and old. When the child began to whimper and cry a young woman picked him up, put him to her breast and gave him the solace that mothers give their offspring. His light yellow body was smooth and soft, and she cuddled him while the soldier looked on complacently. Life was not so hard after all. Here in this country of Maymyo there were compensations. The people were kindly and hospitable. The gardens yielded a lot of vegetables, the girls were attractive, especially when the cool weather had given their cheeks a pink color. No one asked awkward questions. Life was easy and carefree and the teachings of the Buddha were not to be taken too seriously. It was great fun to go to the pagodas with the families and eat the delicious curries that were brought and to while the day away with gossip after the priests had made their short speeches—speeches to which no one paid much attention except the old men who had had their day and

were now preparing for the next existence by a sedulous clicking of their beads and repeating under their breath, "*Annasa, Dokka, Anatha*," thus reminding themselves that all was "change, trouble and illusion."

It was out of this easy life that one day rumors came that there might be trouble in the hills around Toungoo and orders came for the Karen company to go there and to fill the barracks. No one wanted to go. There were too many attachments at Maymyo. They knew a lot of the people around the town. There was the five-day bazaar which never failed to bring its excitements. But in Toungoo there was little to take up one's time. The Karen girls were so shy that they never came to town except with a convoy of elders, and when any of the boys tried to speak to them, they ran away and tried to hide.

For Saw Po Ta there was added difficulty. He liked to be at Maymyo and to run out and spend his spare time with the Shans, for they always had plenty of time. They did not watch their girls all the time as the Karens did, and there was a carelessness about life that appealed to him. Now to go back to Toungoo—well, there was the old school, and he was reminded of its restrictions. There were the Karen elders who often came to the barracks and admonished the boys to do their best. Probably Naw Su would not be there.

As he began to gather up his belongings, preparatory to the transfer, he thought of Naw Su. He remembered the love notes he had written

her, the sly glances they had exchanged at school, his protestations that she was the "only girl in the world." But now, did he want to go back to her? He had enjoyed relations with a Shan girl. She had been rather bold in her advances to him. She had not been shy like a Karen. She had openly worn a love-charm, which had been procured for her by the local Buddhist priest, and when she let it be known that he was the father of the child she was carrying, she would boast of the fact that her child was to be the son of a soldier, for what woman does not dream that every child is to be a son? At first Saw Po Ta was ashamed to have her talk about him. His Karen shyness held him back. The inborn instinct of his elders that irregular sexual relations would bring disaster and the drying up of the land and the failure of the crops made him fearful. But as time went on and nothing seemed to happen, he was careless and later when the little brown creature squirmed on the mat and began to show signs of recognition and to laugh and gurgle, he lost all his scruples and openly took delight in the little thing. Now he was to be transferred to Toungoo. That meant that he would have to leave the Shan girl, for only the soldiers who were legally married to them could take their wives, and he was still fearful of breaking the old Karen taboo if he married outside his tribe.

"It is better that she remain here. The old man will take care of her and the baby. We may be sent back here after a few months, and it will not mat-

ter," thought Saw Po Ta. "She is only a Shan and they are all easy-going."

His reveries were cut short by the orders from the sergeant that they be ready to move to the train with all their equipment at 4 o'clock that afternoon. There were many things to be done. Surplus luggage, that they had collected while in the barracks, had to be discarded. The place must be left clear and in good condition. The boys had to be inspected to see that they had all the things they ought to have and none that they ought not to have. There was bustle and much talk and many orders, some of which had to be quickly countermanded. Finally, order came out of chaos and the men were getting things cleared up. Luggage that could not be piled onto the men was tied up in bundles and certain boys were ordered to pack it on the transport wagons and take it to the luggage van of the train that was already standing on the siding.

Corporal Saw Po Ta had little time to dream while all this confusion was going on. He had not been able to get out to the Shan village to say good-bye to his friends there. He had wished that he might play with the boy for a while, but perhaps it was just as well that he tend to his work and avoid demands on the part of the girl's mother that he should take her along as his wife. It had been pleasant to be with her. She was always compliant to his wishes. She was quiet voiced and knew her place as a woman. He had liked her well

enough. It was nice to have a place to which to go and relax and enjoy himself, but further than that he had no thought. His life centered around himself, and he had had little regard for what others, who had come into his circle, felt or wanted. As long as his desires were satisfied, that was about all he had thought about.

"Well, it will be good to get to a new place. Then I can begin again," thought the corporal. "I don't want this child to follow me around. I will get back to Toungoo and there I will be with my own people. It would be very unpleasant to have a Shan woman, for I know our people look down upon the Shans, and they would make it very uncomfortable for me. It is better that I forget about her. She is only a woman, and does not her own religion teach us that she is not as important as a male dog?"

As the train rattled its way down the hill and through the hot plains about Mandalay, Saw Po Ta sat crowded in with his kit and the other men, for the military did not provide any fancy traveling facilities for its native soldiers. He did not sleep much in the night. There was too much noise and too many men all huddled together. Then there were strange musings that kept coming to him. The Shan girl began to be more attractive as he got farther and farther away, and it came to him that he would not see her or have a chance to play with the baby. His baby! Yes, it was his, but then, was he not a soldier, and could he not have a few liberties to make up for the hardships

of the soldier's life? It was all right to go with his regiment and drop affairs that came up at every camp where they had been located. These girls were not worth much anyhow. Better forget them. Go where the King ordered and let it go at that. It was indeed better so. It was about the hundredth time he assured himself that it was all for the best. But yet, the thoughts kept coming back. He wished he had had time just to have told them he was going and to have given the boy a last hug.

It was early morning when the train pulled into the little wooden station at Toungoo and the cars were shunted off to a siding. An officer, whom they had not seen before, came along and ordered the men to get out and bring their kits and line up alongside the tracks.

They had been in camp a few days when one afternoon Corporal Saw Po Ta looked out and saw the figure of a European walking toward the barracks, and then he recognized that it was his old teacher, Mr. Simms, and there was the Karen pastor with him. They greeted him cordially and he asked them up into the barracks and stood stiffly at attention in their presence, as he would have if they had been officers. They asked him many questions, but he in turn could only think of one or two to ask them about the school and Mama. They invited him to come to church on Sunday, which was the next day. They talked to the other men and invited them all to come to the service.

Long forgotten memories surged through Corporal Saw Po Ta's mind that night and all the next

day, in fact for a number of days following. The sight of his old school and the girls all wearing the Karen dress reminded him of his walks around the compound, of pulling weeds in the garden, while watching the girls draw water, and most of all of his few meetings with Naw Su. When he saw their faces, he realized that they were different. Some whom he had seen as younger ones now were grown up and wearing *nees*.

Where was Naw Su? How he wished she was here and he could send her a love note as he used to do. Would she pretend to spurn it? How he would like to look into those sparkling eyes! But then the disturbing thought: "What about the baby in the Shan village, what would Naw Su say if she knew?"

Life in the barracks was terribly dull. There were routine duties to be performed. They were not interesting, and the men knew that the orders were given with only the purpose of killing time and to keep them out of mischief. No wonder some of them found their only respite in getting drunk and feeling that they were officers and tribal chiefs. In the fantasy of their imaginations they got a fictitious relief from the monotony.

Corporal Saw Po Ta was not making much progress in his army life. He had hoped to be promoted to sergeant when there was a vacancy caused by the discharge of one of the men, but he was passed over and another was given the post. He carried out his duties with a dull, dogged spirit. It had to be done or he would get into the

guard house. He had had enough of that, and so he went through the exacting demands without any audible objections.

The sight of the mountains near-by, where he knew that his own village and that of Naw Su were perched on the ridges, did not add to his comfort. Some days he longed for the Shan plains around Maymyo and to coddle the little boy who must be running around all over the place by this time. But there was something repulsive in the thought of his having to live with the Shans all of his life. He would turn away and begin to long for some vague unreality that seemed to float before his mind but which eluded him and which he could not define.

One Sunday evening, after he had been to church in the old school chapel, together with two or three of his comrades, he was especially restless. Had the worship and the pastor's sermon touched him? The story of Ruth and her faith in God and her willingness to glean the fields and do anything to gain a part in the chosen race had interested him. He could not forget it. Somehow it reminded him of Naw Su, but there was also something else that bothered him. That was the child in the Shan village. He never had named the boy. He always thought of him as "the Shan child." He had been reluctant to acknowledge his relation to it. In the easy-going community little was thought of it. It was just one of the things that happen. But to him it seemed a real barrier to further progress. While it lasted he could not seem to go on. He realized

that he loved Naw Su, with all her impudent ways. Now there was a barrier between them. He could see no way out. The routine of the soldier life became more and more dull. The whole world seemed to have become a sort of guard house, in which he was the principal prisoner.

One day he had orders to go to the station the next morning to meet the train from Maymyo and bring up a new detachment of soldiers who were being transferred to his company. He took this assignment as he did all others. Another routine task to be done. He had carried out his orders and the small squad was marching up the long street to the barracks when he began an under-the-breath conversation with the boy who was nearest to him. The fellow said, "We are very glad to get away from Maymyo, for we were afraid up there. There was an epidemic of cholera all over the place, and we soldiers had strict orders not to go to the bazaar or to go out at all. We lost a few boys, but in the villages around us there were many deaths, both of old folks and young children."

Saw Po Ta had a strange feeling go over him. "Did the sickness hit all the villages about the town?"

"Every village had its deaths and most of the people ran away and tried to escape. They made all their offerings to the devils but they did not seem to do any good. I guess the *nats* are especially hungry."

Saw Po Ta felt a great anxiety. Had his child been among the victims? He wanted to ask about

him and the mother, but he felt a certain reticence. The boy would not know anything about it, and he would not want to go into a long explanation as to why he was interested. "Better let the matter rest," he thought, as they stirred up a small cloud of dust as they marched up the road.

But all day long he could not get his mind off the matter. He longed to know if his child were alive. Could the boys tell him anything? Better not talk too much to strangers. Better keep ones thoughts and longings to oneself and avoid unpleasant situations. But he could not resist asking questions. However, the boys could not tell him anything definite about how far the cholera had gone. It had killed off "everyone," was all they could say. This made him all the more unsettled. He longed to see the child, but perhaps it was better that the baby should be dead. Then he would have no strings to tie him. He would be like a "buffalo with no nose-rope," as the proverb expressed it.

The months dragged on. Sometimes he rejoiced that he was free. Again he mourned over his loss, or at least what he now took for granted was his loss. Then he would think of the attractive girls he had first seen in the bazaar. Then the sparkling eyes of Naw Su would dance before his mind. He thought of asking leave and going to Maymyo to find out the truth, but then the fear of the dread and sudden cholera made him hesitate, and he decided that it would not be safe to do that. He wanted to talk to the pastor of the church and get from him what had happened to Naw Su, but he

could not make up his mind to talk about intimate things. So he drifted on from month to month in uncertainty.

He had been counting the days till the time of his discharge from the army. How slowly time went by. Would the anniversary of his enlistment ever come? Must he be discharged and not know what to do. He had learned by carefully guarded inquiries at the school that Naw Su had returned to her village and was doing a fine bit of work as a teacher. But he could not go there. He hated to go back to his own village and become just a *po-tha* (boy) under the elders again. He wanted to marry, but they would pick out a girl that he did not know, and he did not want that.

Just before the group of men who were to be discharged were to go, another squad from Maymyo came to fill their place. They were arriving that day. As Saw Po Ta saw them wearily march into the camp, he recognized one of the boys from another company who had gone out to the Shan village with him. He lost no time in looking him up and asking him about the camp at Maymyo and about his visits to the villages and all sorts of questions with which to blind the boy as to the main object of his quizzing. Then the boy burst out, "You remember that old Shan we used to visit? Well, his whole family was wiped out and not a one left but the old man himself. I think he must have been too tough for the *nats*, and so they let him alone, but they took all the young folks of his family."

Saw Po Ta kept his Karen poker face and asked,

casually, "Was there not even a grandson left to the old man?"

"Not a one," answered the lad. Little did he realize what those words meant for Saw Po Ta.

CHAPTER XXXIV

IT WAS mid-July and the monsoon had been pouring water by the buckets full for a whole week. Never a let up. The rain had been beating incessantly and the dampness seemed to penetrate the bones. Even the young people had become somber and life was indeed a burden. The men were out on the hillsides, drenched with water, trying to keep their rice plots from being altogether washed down the slopes. The women went about their work of cooking and weaving in a listless sort of way. They had brought their rude looms into the houses, but there was not a tight place in the whole village where the rain did not spatter in through the cracks in the loosely woven bamboo slats.

There was no need of going down to the spring to bring water. With an ingenious arrangement of bamboo troughs they could catch all the rain water they needed to use. But the troughs had to be watched, for the wind was strong, and it often blew them out of line of the eaves of the house and the water splashed off onto the ground.

Naw Su was out in the yard trying to fix the pipes. There had been a welcome letup in the

rain, and she was taking advantage of it. With her *dah* she was cutting some lengths of the useful giant grass to fit as props to hold the trough in place. While she was working at the side of the little shack that served as a school, one of the village young women, who was about Naw Su's age, came along and remarked.

"You are a queer young pullet. You have a house but you have no husband."

"But I have my school and I like the children. I want to teach them."

"You have a lot of children, but you have no husband. That is not right. Our ancestors will be angry at that. The *nats* will dry up our land."

"Well, it's not drying up now," retorted Naw Su.

"All the other girls of your age are married and only you stand out and refuse to have a "young Buffalo" brought for your good. We all follow the customs of our ancestors. You alone are breaking the laws. You will wreck this whole village by your foolish ways. I say, you must let the elders get you a husband," and with this she went off puffing at her monkey-bone-stemmed pipe, trying to get a little smoke out of wet tobacco.

This set up a train of thought in Naw Su's mind. She had stoutly refused to hear anything of the demands of her parents and of the tribe. She had often felt the loneliness of her position. There was not a single girl in the village of her age, or even five years younger, who had not fallen into the accepted custom. She alone upset the smooth

running of the village ways. She was indeed a storm and a problem.

It was not that Naw Su was without love in her heart. Secretly she was much disturbed. Always it came back to her that someday she would be married, but she now had a destiny to fulfill—the bringing of a new life to the village through the school. The children liked her, even though they often echoed the talk of the parents and asked why she did not have a husband. But then they told her, “We like you and we like the songs, and we like to know about all the strange things you are telling us. So we want you to keep on teaching us.”

Before she could get the pipe-line fully set up again, the wind came up the valley in great gusts that nearly tore down all her work, and she wished that she had a man to help her get it in order. Then great drops of rain came down and the wind blew the water all around. She could not work against it. The only thing to do was to run for such shelter as the shack afforded. Here she sat by the fireplace, trying to keep the sticks of wood from sputtering and the dull fire from going out. The words of the neighbor had had their effect. She did wish she had a man to whom she could call for help and who would share the duties of the house with her. Her mind flashed back to the boys in school, and she wondered what they were doing. Were they all plodding out to their rice fields and had they wives and little brown babies crawling about their houses? Where was Saw Po Ta, who used to bother her when she wanted to study, and who used to

write those notes which she hated to acknowledge but which after all she did love to pull out and read when no one was looking.

Just then a terrific gust of wind blew up the valley and took off half the roof from her shack. The water poured down and there was no time to indulge in idle reveries. She must rescue the flying bamboos and get them back in place. No matter if her clothes were wet, she must try to keep the water from destroying her few books. They were her most precious possessions. In the midst of her struggles to get things in order the face of Saw Po Ta kept coming to her. The seeds planted by the women and the children—to say nothing of the demands of the elders—were bearing fruit. Would it not be good if she had a man to work with her to lead the village out from their superstitions and fears?

As for Saw Po Ta he was still in Toungoo. He was discharged from the army, but he could not settle down to anything. His friends urged him to go back to the hills and visit his own village and get married and take up a plot for cultivation. But he stubbornly refused to take their suggestions. Some of the boys in the army urged him to re-enlist, but he turned deaf ears to them. He refused to say anything. No one knew what he was thinking about. Such an uncommunicative individual was soon left to his own devices. It was clear that Saw Po Ta was not happy and that something was troubling him.

Tales about Saw Po Ta had been brought to Mr. Simms by the town pastor, who found that he was inadequate to deal with the problems of the young man. Perhaps if the big teacher should visit Saw Po Ta, he might be able to bring him out of the muddle. But when Mr. Simms visited Saw Po Ta, the lad was polite but only talked of insignificant things, and shut off all attempts to get at his inner self, which was as hard and as tightly closed as that of the proverbial oyster.

A few weeks later, Saw Po Ta had come along by the schoolhouse. He seemed to like to linger on the road. It brought back memories and they seemed to warm his heart as nothing else could do. He sat on the bank of the river and looked across to the hills in the distance and to the people bathing on the other side. He heard the shouts of the children and the shrill calling of the women. He sat there a long time. It was the only place that gave him any relief from the dullness of his existence. There was no one of whom to ask questions. It was none of their business anyhow. So there he sat, leaning against a tree, while the water flowed by, with eddies and backwashes and a few lazy rafts of bamboo and a boat or two drifting down with the current.

"This is a very pleasant river," came a voice behind him, and he turned. It was in his language but the words had a foreign accent. The voice was not that of Mr. Simms. He turned, and to his surprise he saw the white face and flowing beard of the old teacher who had often visited the school when

he was a pupil. He scrambled to his feet and shook hands with the old man, for all the boys had liked to have him visit the school. They liked his stories and his understanding smile.

"You are one of the boys I used to see in school, are you not?" asked Mr. Walton, leaning on his cane.

"Yes, teacher, I used to like to listen to you in school, but I have been out of school and away for a long time and I am—well—I don't know. I guess I am a black sheep."

"Black sheep can be washed and become white," laughed the teacher.

"Oh no," replied the other, "it would be very hard to do."

"Yes, hard for men, but not for God."

"I am sorry to say that I am very black," continued the ex-soldier. He had never thought he would say such things but here he was talking to a white teacher when he had never opened his mouth to any of his own people—but it seemed to him that there was an expression of love and comprehension on the face of the old man that made him feel he could trust him. It was easy to talk to him.

Slowly they began to walk up the river bank, and as they walked, they talked, and without realizing it the story came out. The boy had left school to join the army. The army life was a great disappointment to him. He liked the chances to break the rules and get off by himself, to run out to visit the Shans and to go to the five-day bazaars,

but there were many things he did not like, and he looked forward to getting out of the army. Now that he was free again he did not know what to do. He knew that if he went back to his mountain village the elders would force him to settle down, and much as he wanted to settle down, he could not put himself under their antiquated regime.

"What do you want to live for?" asked the teacher, after Saw Po Ta had finished talking, and after a few minutes of walking.

"I don't know," was the characteristic Karen answer.

"Have you never had any thought of what use you are going to make of this life that God has given you?"

"They wanted me to keep on in the army, but that does not make me happy. I want to go to the hills, but that does not make me happy. I like to stay here in town, but that does not make me happy!"

Then with a twinkle in his blue eyes, the teacher remarked, "You are seeking happiness, yet you do not seem to have found it. I have noticed that if I seek happiness that often I am disappointed. Have you ever thought of another way to find happiness?"

"What other way?" asked the boy, looking up with a new interest.

"Happiness is shy like a pig. You come up on him directly, and he will run, but you come up to him quietly and unobserved and you can catch him; so if we seek happiness, it eludes us, but if we

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go at it in a roundabout way, we find it unexpectedly. I find my greatest happiness is in trying to make others happy. That is the kind of life I enjoy."

"But we poor Karens will never have much to be happy about," evaded Saw Po Ta.

"You have had very hard times, but I know you will have much better. Look at what the schools are doing. Look how many of your people have started out to find freedom from all the *nats* and devils. Some are becoming clerks and teachers. There is a wonderful future for you. God has come to you and is calling you forward."

"But, teacher, I cannot go forward. I have slipped back too far. I have broken the taboos of our elders . . ." Then, after what was indeed a struggle, he blurted out, "I married outside the tribe. I had a Shan baby."

"Where is he now?" asked the teacher, who was not as astonished as the boy expected.

"The cholera took him and the mother too. Can I be forgiven?" His face was like that of one peering up from the depths of a deep well.

"Why do you want to be forgiven?" asked the older man.

"I have broken the custom of my fathers, but more than that, I have gone against God. I feel condemned and I am very sad. What must I do to find some release from this thing that I have done?"

He looked into the face of the teacher. The hate and condemnation that he feared was not manifest.

Instead there was a steady look of understanding and love, for which Saw Po Ta was grateful and which gave him hope. They talked on for a long time, the old man sitting beside the young man, who was scarcely out of his adolescence, showing him a love that was giving him a second chance. Then came a few moments when neither spoke. Thoughts too deep for expression were passing through their minds, and prayers that could not be uttered were surging up to the common Father of them both.

"I have made a mess of my life," said the young man. "I thought when I became a *bo* that I would have everything my own way, but now I see that the pleasure I sought was not genuine. It has brought sorrow instead."

"Out of weakness cometh strength," said the teacher. "You see that you have failed. You trusted in your own strength and in the might of force. You were deceived into thinking that in the army you would gain power to make a big name for yourself. You thought that if you followed the flesh you would find happiness, but you found that you had broken the laws not only of your ancestors, but of God. Do you now see that you were on the wrong track?"

There was no reply. The young man's head hung lower and lower. His eyes were on the ground. The teacher could feel the tremor of the boy's body as his soul struggled for release. He waited. At length he was prompted to say, "You have missed the way, but it is still open for you as it is for all of us. You

can change your direction if you will accept the New Testament command which says: 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins.' It is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses us from all evil. Through his resurrection we gain new life. It is victorious and eternal. It satisfies our deepest desires and needs. No longer do we vainly try in our own puny strength to be good, but we open our hearts to him in faith and let his goodness flow through us. That makes the change in our lives. When we are cleansed, we are given new strength with which to obey his commands, as when he says, 'Go and sin no more,' or, 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.' "

A great quiet flowed over the two men. Then came halting words scarcely audible, but vibrant with earnestness. Saw Po Ta cried, "O God, for Christ's sake forgive me! Help me to find the way. I have sinned. I am lost. Show me the way. Help me to seek and to obey thy will. Help me to help my people. Make me to grow. For Christ's sake Amen."

Looking up with a face that shone with a new light, he said, "I have been wrong. I thought that if I joined the army *I* would be a big man. I could carry a gun and wear a uniform and strut down the road and everybody would look at me; but it only led to a lot of trouble. In the army we were always fighting, always getting into drunken brawls, being put into the guard house, being

bawled out by the officers, and always envious of the fellow who got the easier job. I thought that Karens would be great if they could fight, but we only got curses and blows and, well, sometimes we felt like revolting or shooting ourselves. We just dragged on and looked for the day when we would be released. But even that day had little promise for us—just to go back to the hills and cut jungle. Now I begin to see things I never thought existed before. If we seek for just ourselves, we don't find them. Surely, there is a God, and if we obey his laws and follow him, then we have peace. I feel it now. It is coming on. I want to follow him all my life. Is not this the best way to serve my people?"

"I thank God for your desire to consecrate your life to him for the service of your people," replied Mr. Walton. "It is a noble ambition. But you will need to know how best to accomplish your mission. You will need the fellowship of the church. Baptism is the symbol of the death to the old life and the beginning of the new. Obey your Master's command. Then there is the Bible School at Insein. There you can study the Bible which will show you the way you seek. You will be with other young men who have the same purpose. I believe in your sincerity and I will recommend you to the school. Take the full course. Study hard, both for your mind and your heart, and then see what openings God sets before you. I believe you have a great future. You have the qualities that, if consecrated to God, will enable you to do great things for your people."

CHAPTER XXXV

N^{AW} SU, now *Thramu Naw Su*, was drilling some of the children in singing the songs of the hymn book. "You must stand up and sing out," she told them. "There will be a great crowd of people there at the village. There will be other villages with their choirs. You must sing with all your might and sing just as I have sung it. Let everybody know that you in this village can sing better than any other village of the hills."

They were practicing for the annual gathering of all the churches, the great district Associational meetings of the Christians, which this year met in Saw Wa Der, a village a little over a day's walk to the west. It was months since Naw Su had had any word from the outside world. Now was a chance to see her old friends of the school, to see the teachers, and to worship with a great crowd. She was thrilled with the thought. The men who had gone to the bazaar in the city had told them that many people were talking about the new way of worshipping God that had come into the hills, and how different things were from the old days when everyone fought everyone else.

Every child that could get permission from re-

luctant parents was up long before the dawn. Some of the older people were rather timidly standing by the little fires they had kindled to keep them warm. It was a strange adventure to go to a meeting. Just then Naw Su came along and called out that they were ready to start. The youngest children bounded down the path and the older ones followed. The teacher brought up the rear, to keep her eyes on all the party in front of her.

Every path leading to Saw Wa Der village was full of people walking along single file, over the ridges, down across the streams in the valleys. For many it was their first trip so far from their own hillsides—and to be in such crowds was a new and fearsome experience. They had seen crowds at funerals, but there was always a lot of drunkenness and fighting at such times. Now everyone seemed to be in a happy, expectant mood. Goodwill was the prevailing thought.

The first thing the men did without command, when they were assigned to the house in which they were to sleep, was to unsling their *dahs*, which every man wore along the way as a protection. When these swords had been put aside, everybody shook hands with his neighbor, asked where he came from and sat down to the business of getting acquainted.

Naw Su's school children were thrilled at all the new sights they were seeing. They had walked a day and a half over the hills. They were first shown the house where they were to leave their bags and blankets, and then they were taken to the

long shed of bamboo, which had been set up for the common dining room. The girls tried to slip in as shyly as possible. They had never seen such long tables, just a couple of split open bamboo slats set along on the ground—to them very elegant. Young people brought along baskets of steaming rice. Sections of banana leaves were laid down to serve as plates and the rice was placed on them. Other young people brought earthen pots of beef that had been boiled with spices, as a curry, and poured a half coconut full of this on the pile of rice. Fingers served for knives and forks. The young people soon forgot their shyness and ate heartily of the good food. After washing off their fingers at the long bamboo water joints standing at the entrance to the shed, they all went over to a comparatively level spot where a big shelter of bamboo and thatch grass had been erected for the meeting.

The chief interest here was the presence of the white teachers from America. How funny they looked, with their white faces, their queer eyes that looked so blue, the beards which covered half the faces of the two men. The children had to stifle their giggles. There was also a white woman, with a funny long dress, gathered in at the waist. Her head was covered with a big white thing that looked like the top of a toadstool.

While they were looking at these strange things and getting accustomed to the other new experiences, one of the pastors got up and, clapping his hands together, said that the meeting would open with a song service. The singing of the new hymns

was a thrilling experience. The children wanted to sing all the time. It made them happy. But after they had sung for a while, the leader said that he must introduce the strangers, for many who had come to this meeting had never been to one before and therefore did not know the teachers from the West who had brought them the "good news" which had bound them together.

Mr. Simms was asked to stand up. A murmur of recognition rose from the audience, for they knew him, as he had visited many of the villages. Naw Su was delighted to see him. Then, as he sat down, all eyes were turned toward the tall, slim young man who sat beside Mr. Simms. While all white people looked alike, the natives could not remember having seen him before. Mr. Simms introduced him, saying that this young teacher, Dr. Ward, has only recently come from America and he is not a teacher of religion; but a teacher of health. He has come to help the Karens keep their bodies well, for the bodies are the temples of God's spirit, and religion teaches that they should have good care. Dr. Ward would visit the villages when he could and in the rainy season, when it was difficult to travel, he would teach in the city and help take care of the school children and others who might need his help.

The new teacher said that he hoped that the people would trust him and come to him and let him help them, for he could see that many of them were not very strong. He had heard that they thought that all sickness was due to the *nats* but he had

learned that it was often due to the wrong food and to the lack of medicines.

As soon as the meeting was over Naw Su went up to greet her old teachers and they introduced her to the medicine teacher. She asked him if he had brought any medicines with him. He replied that he had and went into the little shelter that had been put up for the white teachers, and brought out a bag. The people standing around were amazed at the array of bottles, and asked if there were enough to cure all diseases. One man said; "I have been having fever for two weeks, but I got up and came here because I wanted to attend the meetings. Can you cure my fever?" Another said; "My little boy fell off the house and hurt his back and cannot stand up straight. Can you cure him?" Another, "My little girl has sores all over her legs. Have you got medicine for her?" And so on. One woman stood back, but motioned to Naw Su and told her that she had been sick ever since her baby was born and died. She was hoping that she might be cured. The doctor had given out a lot of medicines, but when Naw Su told him about the woman, he told her to bring her into his shelter where he could ask her more questions about herself. It was nearly an hour later when they came out. The face of the doctor was pale but his eyes were flashing fire.

The bell had rung for the next service and Mr. Simms was just putting on his sun helmet to go across the open space, when the doctor joined him and said, "It is a shame what these women have to

suffer in their ignorance and fear. They think everything is due to the *nats*. I wish I could be a dozen doctors and help in all these villages. No sanitation, no proper food, pigs and chickens under the houses. What a cleaning up they need!"

Naw Su asked Mr. Simms, "Can't the new white medicine teacher come to my village? We need him there very much."

"We will see. He wants to do all he can. If we can arrange it, we will go over to your range of hills and visit you."

Naw Su was wondering what she might do for the new teacher and how to introduce him to her village so that the people would accept him. At the meeting place, she squatted on the straw with her school children. The leader announced that a quartette had just arrived from the plains and would sing. She did not hear the name of the place he mentioned. Four young men stood up, with hymn books in their hands. After two or three attempts to get the tune, they sang a song which she had not heard before. The men were dressed like Burmans. Everybody was still. Their voices sounded out clearly. One of them looked familiar to Naw Su, but he was too far away for her to see his face clearly. The voice sounded familiar, too. It reminded her of the choir singing in the school in the city. Whose voice was it? She began to feel queer inside.

On her way out from the meeting place she found herself drifting along with the crowd, and she came face to face with the visiting choir boys.

One of them looked at her and held out his hand and said, "Did I not know you in school?"

"Yes, I went to school in the city," she said absent-mindedly. "Were you in school there too?" Then a flood of recognition passed over her face and she dropped her eyes, turned and rushed away. She was too shy to say anything more. It was Saw Po Ta! The last she had heard of him he had run away and joined the military. What had happened to him? Had he become a Christian, too? And—did he—did he? She dared not say even to herself the question that surged up in her heart.

The elders were watching too closely for Naw Su to return and talk to Saw Po Ta, after she had regained her composure, but she did learn that he had found military life unhappy and that he had felt a new life in his heart and was going to a theological school to study the Bible in order to become a teacher.

Much of Naw Su's spare time between meetings, and even long after the gong had sounded, was spent working for Dr. Ward. She was thrilled to be with him, and all the time she was thinking of those men and women in her own village whose suffering might be relieved by him.

But she could not put aside thoughts of Saw Po Ta. There had been many sly glances during the meetings. Every time she looked at him he seemed to look more attractive. "Was he really going to be a teacher? Would he be willing to help her teach?" The looks that he gave her did not come from dull eyes!

The last morning of the meetings one of the tiny girls in Naw Su's delegation handed her a white piece of paper rolled up like a cigarette. "One of the choir boys from the plains asked me to give this to you," was all she said, but her eyes sparkled with interest as she said it. Naw Su hid the note in her waist. She dared not be seen reading it. Quickly she slipped into the jungle and there she saw, as she suspected, it was from "Him of the Iron Heart." It called her a sweet roe from the forest. Would she think of a wild buffalo from the plains as one with whom she could be yoked together with one heart to work for their people? She did not notice the mixed simile, but quickly tucked the paper under her waist. She had no paper. She could not write back. What should she say?

Before this note had come she had fully made up her mind to follow the young doctor, have him come to her village, and then in the rainy season go down to the city and have him teach her how to nurse people in sickness. But now? She was all upset. If Saw Po Ta kept up his quest, would she have to give up school? The village elders, who knew of no life for a woman but to marry, had long been talking about her because she had not married. She wanted to teach. She wanted to help her own people. That was God's will for her. But—well, it would be nice to have a husband like other women.

As the last meeting was concluded, and the visitors started back over the hills to their homes, they

had plenty to talk about. For the missionaries there was the satisfaction of having seen the largest crowd that had thus far attended an Annual Association, and the realization that the Christian way of life was gaining ground, even though they agreed that the villagers still had a long way to go and much to learn. From their lips fell such expressions as: "A cause for wonder . . . Such happy singing! . . . So many people together and no drinking or fights . . . Better than the customs of their ancestors . . . Now they can live and prosper!" It did indeed mark a milestone in the progress of the Karen people and they were never tired of talking it over. New villages had been touched and the message of the "good news" was bringing new life.

Naw Su's pupils were a happy group as they trudged along with their bags over their shoulders. Some had collected a few leaves of what they called "books" tracts and song sheets, and were treasuring them. The conversation was endless. Naw Su let them talk. She answered their many questions rather absent-mindedly. She had thoughts of her own that they little suspected. However, one little tot wanted to ask her what the funny white paper that she handed her the day of the meetings was, but she somehow refrained, for she did not dare. She felt that her teacher would not want to talk about it.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A YEAR and several months had passed by since the Annual Associational meetings. Thramu Naw Su was the accepted village teacher. She had resisted all plans of her parents to get her to tie up with any young sambur. But the villagers of late had been puzzled because when people, especially travelling teachers from the city school came, they would bring her letters, and often take letters back from her. What did this mean? When asked, Naw Su would only reply that she was writing to her school teachers or friends. And when pressed to the limit of her patience, she would say that she was asking for advice as to how to teach the children. But still the village could not understand. Writing love letters was an unknown art to them and so Naw Su was able to hide her secret.

The medicine teacher had visited the village a number of times, and it seemed to him that a little progress had been made in cleaning it up. He had had many long talks with Naw Su about it. The old people complained that things were not as they used to be when they could drop rubbish about anywhere without a teacher scolding them.

Naw Su had persuaded her parents to consent to her building a pen for the pigs and a shelter for the buffaloes so that they would not have to be kept under the house. One or two others had followed her example. Around the schoolhouse the ground was swept clean and a few hardy crotons and hibiscus and even a pomegranate bush had been planted. Naw Su had also urged her father to plant a few orange trees, which the missionary had sent to her, for he had written that they could sell the fruit to the bazaars and get good money for it with which to buy the salt and fish they wanted.

Today the whole village was buzzing like a swarm of bees that had been raided in their hive high up on a bee-tree. Preparations were going on for a big feast. The next full moon, Naw Su had told them, a young buffalo from the plains was coming to the village and she was going to be tied up to him. The school children were all in a flurry. They had persuaded their parents to fatten two good-sized pigs, and an old cow, which was past her usefulness, was to be killed. Chickens had been confined in their baskets and were protesting loudly. Many a girl had spent hours pounding out paddy till it was turned into well-polished white rice. There was a basketful in almost every house, for what Karen does not love the feasting that goes with a marriage? The crude wooden mills had ground out bottle after bottle of sesimum oil, and all the bee-trees had been robbed of their honey for miles around. Great supplies

of betel nuts and leaves were ready for the expected guests.

The school children had collected orchids as well as ferns and other flowers from the jungle. The boys had cut coconut and arrack palm fronds and had transformed the bamboo chapel into a forest of green. It had the beauty of simplicity that was very pleasing.

As Naw Su had to be everywhere directing the work, she was interested to overhear bits of the conversation of both young and old. One of the small pupils remarked, "The young buffalo should be here soon. We all want to see him. They say he was a fine soldier and became a *bo*. I wonder why he did not stay in the army and wear the wonderful clothes. I heard that he went to the Bible School for four years. He must know everything. I wonder if he will want to teach in this village. I would like to see his uniform and the big black shoes. I hope he will bring his gun and shoot it off to scare away any *nats* that may be lurking about."

"What, *nats* in this village?" piped up a big boy, with a sniff of his nose. "Don't you know that Naw Su has driven all the *nats* away? We worship God. He is bigger than the *nats*. They run from him. We don't fear them any more, for we worship God. Look and see how clean our village is now, and see what a lot of pretty girls we have here, and how their faces shine."

His companion, who was splitting a bit of bamboo with which to tie up a coconut frond, replied, "That foreign medicine teacher has made us a

lot of trouble, but he has given us medicine that has kept the fever away and little babies do not die as they used to do. Every girl who goes to the school looks better than those who don't. I am going to marry one of them as soon as my folks will let me."

"The girls are not far ahead of us. We boys can read and sing and we can reckon the price of betel nuts and paddy so that we need not be cheated by the Burmans as our fathers used to be. And see, every house has a new ladder."

"Listen! I hear the wedding horns. They are coming over the eastern ridge. Yes, and the singing too. There must be a big company. You can't hear them now; they have gone down among the trees, but they are on the way. Watch, they will be getting to the river before long. Then we shall see the wonderful young buffalo!"

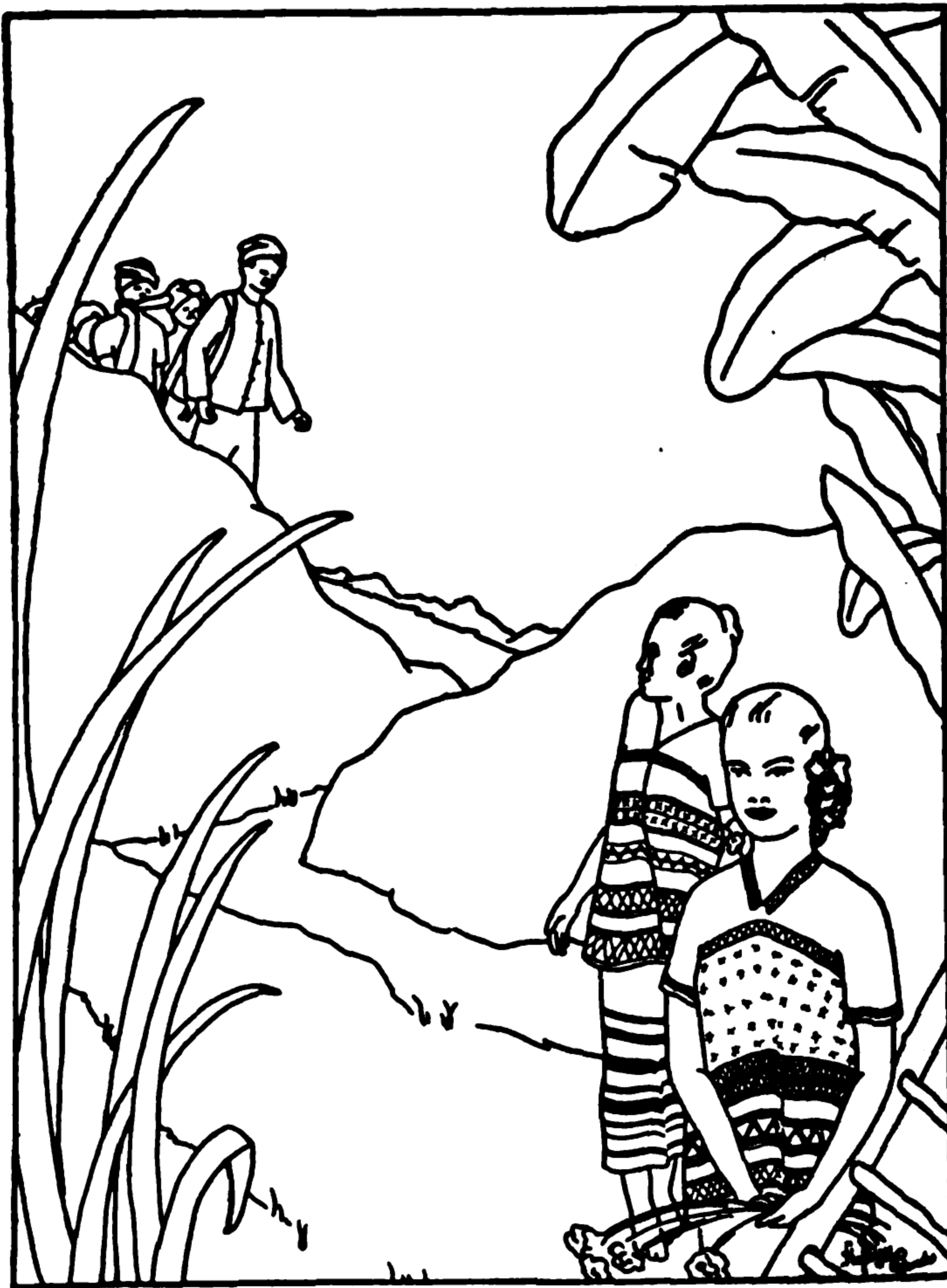
As the party came on, the music sounded louder when it mounted each successive crest of the intervening hills, and was lost momentarily in the valleys. Then, as it emerged from the jungle by the river, the horns sounded out clearer and it set everyone's nerves tingling with expectation. The party waded across the river and came up the path to the village. In the middle of the group was a young man who had dignity and poise. It was Saw Po Ta. He was a different man from the boy who dropped love notes by the well. The love for a woman whom he could not forget through the three years of military training, but who had become a consuming passion during his four years

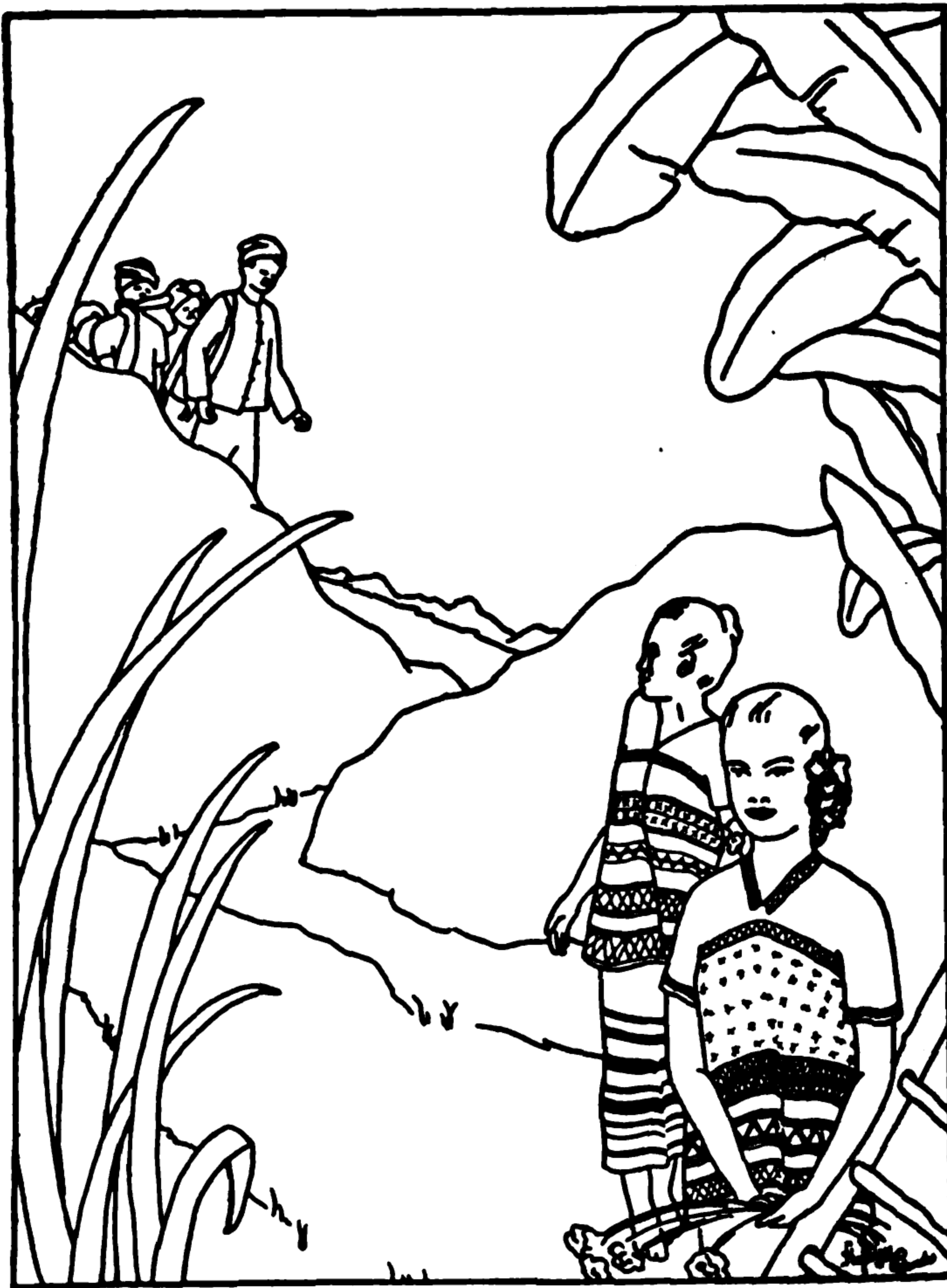
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The whole mountain district had never seen such a bride as Naw Su. Instead of shyly waiting to be pulled out of her seclusion, she was all dressed and ready at the top of the ladder at her parents' house. Even now they could not understand her. She was as usual breaking all customs. Not only had she woven the customary *hsay* for her man, but she had woven a beautiful skirt and a black *hsay* with a red border for herself. There was also a black and red turban-like scarf for her headdress. Her hair had been well oiled and was drawn back and tied in a knot at the nape of her neck and a spray of rare blue orchids peeked out from under the scarf. Two of her teachers were also dressed in fresh, stiff new garments, but were not at all certain as to the part Naw Su expected them to play.

The ceremony in the chapel followed more or less the usual Christian customs and was rather long-drawn-out. The visiting Karen pastor was anxious to tell the villagers all he could about the sacredness of marriage as taught by the religion that was new to most of those present. Each village that had sent delegations to the wedding wanted their young people to sing to show how well they could shout the new Christian songs.

Then came the wedding feast. The long lines of bamboo strips had been laid down in an open space by the chapel and on them the jade green sections of banana leaves that served as plates.

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Young men and women lugged around great baskets of rice and gave each guest two or three generous handfuls. There was also plenty of beef and pork curry. They all ate as if this might be their last chance to enjoy a wedding feast. The elders praised the tea that was served in bamboo cups and said it was much better than the liquor that their fathers had given out on such occasions.

There was great fun that evening. Groups of young men would come to Naw Su's house and serenade her with harps and gongs, and with the new and lively Christian songs. It was long after midnight before the last group went its way down the path with flaring torches, and other guests had curled up on floors. At last Naw Su and Saw Po Ta were left to themselves. Saw Po Ta told his bride that during the evening one of the elders of the village had told him that they were growing as Christians and that they wanted a leader for their church. They had agreed that they wanted him to stay with them, not to take Naw Su away, but to be their teacher right here. Naw Su drew up close to him and whispered, "What wonders God can do! What a wind has blown over these hills!"

"They tell me that it was a storm that brought you here. It has changed many of the villages in these hills. Stubborn elders, like old trees, have fallen before it. And we will see many more changes."

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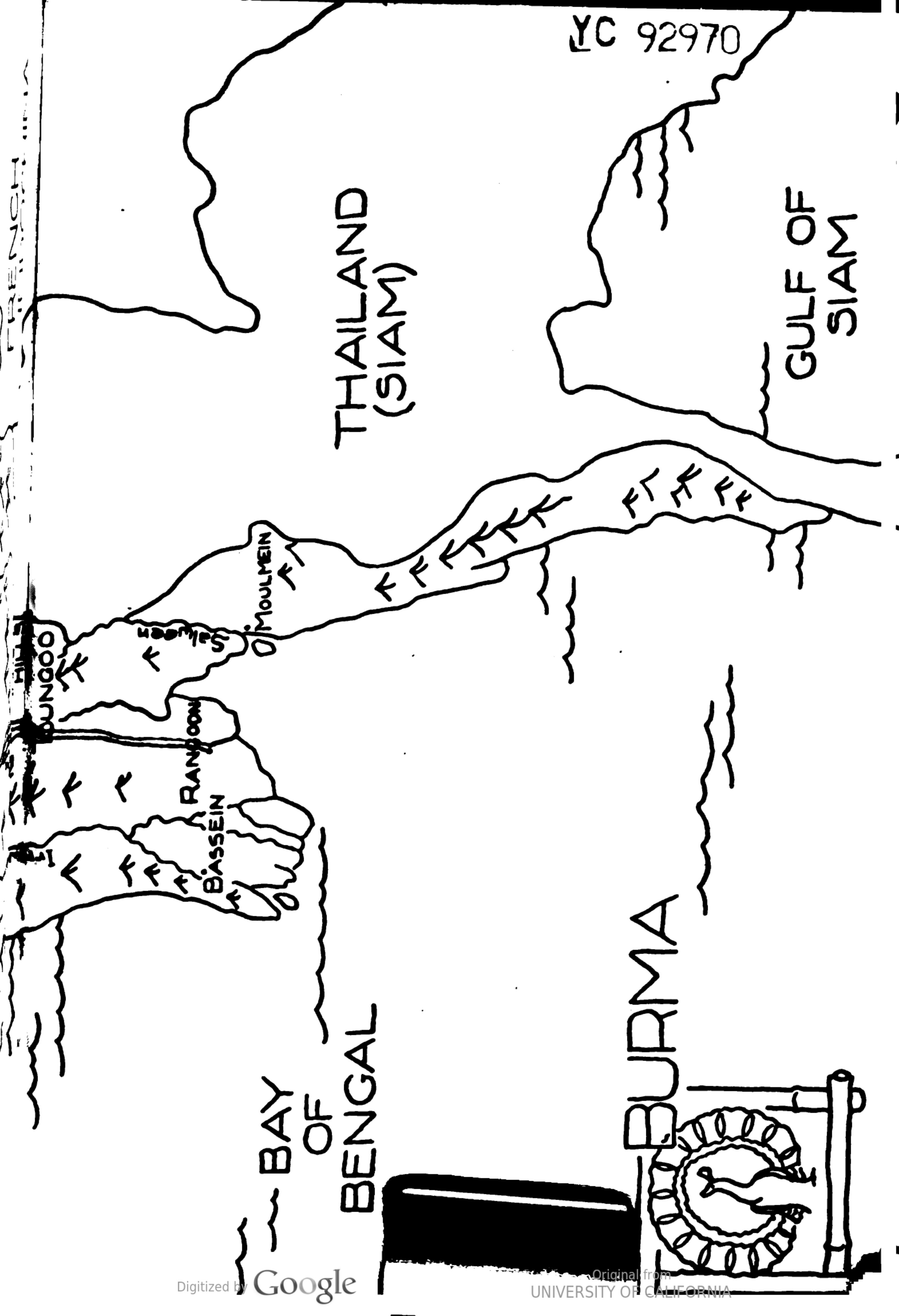
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